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A-League Round 19 Friday 27th Jan - Sunday 29th Jan 2012

This Week's Line Up

SOUVENIR ADRIAN LEIJER POSTER Page 14

HAL ROUND 18 REWIND Page 10

BFTP: MAN UTD OZ TOUR 1967 Page 20

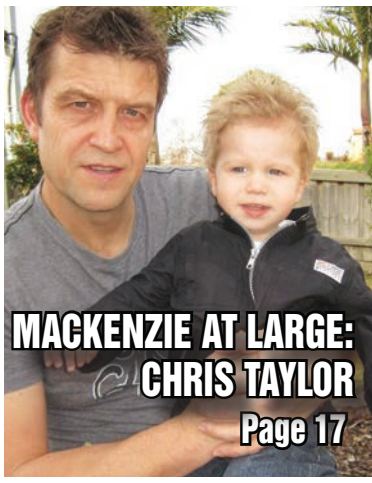
MACKENZIE AT LARGE: CHRIS TAYLOR Page 17

PHOTO: DANIEL FLIS

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SCOREBOARD

TABLE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
1 Central Coast Mariners	18	12	4	2	30	13	17	40
2 Brisbane Roar	18	8	5	5	34	21	13	29
3 Wellington Phoenix	18	8	3	7	24	20	4	27
4 Melbourne Heart	18	7	5	6	27	23	4	26
5 Perth Glory	18	7	4	7	23	25	-2	25
6 Sydney FC	18	6	5	7	22	27	-5	23
7 Adelaide United	18	4	8	6	20	30	-10	20
8 Melbourne Victory	17	4	7	6	21	27	-6	19
9 Newcastle Jets	18	5	4	9	21	30	-9	19
10 Gold Coast United	17	3	5	9	19	25	-6	14

THIS WEEK

Week 17	Fixture	Venue	Local	AEDT
Thur 26 Jan 2012	Melbourne Victory v Sydney FC	AAMI Park	4:00pm	4:00pm
Fri 27 Jan 2012	Gold Coast United v Central Coast Mariners	Skilled Park	7:00pm	8:00pm
Sat 28 Jan 2012	Brisbane Roar v Newcastle Jets	Suncorp Stadium	6:45pm	7:45pm
Sun 29 Jan 2012	Wellington Phoenix v Melbourne Heart	Westpac Stadium	4:30pm	2:30pm
Sun 29 Jan 2012	Adelaide United v Perth Glory	Hindmarsh Stadium	4:30pm	5:00pm
Wed 1 Feb 2012	Melbourne Victroy v Gold Coast United	Aurora Stadium, Launceston	7:30pm	7:30pm

NEXT WEEK

Week 18	Fixture	Venue	Local	AEDT
Fri 3 Feb 2012	Adelaide United v Wellington Phoenix	Hindmarsh Stadium	7:30pm	8:00pm
Sat 4 Feb 2012	Central Coast Mariners v Brisbane Roar	Bluetongue Stadium	5:30pm	5:30pm
Sat 4 Feb 2012	Melbourne Heart v Melbourne Victory	AAMI Park	7:45pm	7:45pm
Sun 5 Feb 2012	Sydney FC v Newcastle Jets	Sydney Football Stadium	5:00pm	5:00pm
Mon 6 Feb 2012	Perth Glory v Gold Coast United	nib Stadium	7:00pm	10:00pm

ROUND 18 RESULTS

Newcastle Jets 0
Wellington Phoenix 1
(Muscat 58')
Crowd 11, 694 at Ausgrid Stadium

Melbourne Heart 1 *(Germano 31)*
Brisbane Roar 1 *(Berisha 69)*
Crowd: 7118 at AAMI Park

Sydney FC 2 *(Karol Kisel 71m, Bruno Cazarine 89m)*
Gold Coast United 1 *(Ben Halloran 55m)*
Crowd: 8,541 at Sydney Football Stadium

Perth Glory 4 *(Smeltz 13, 34p, Sterjovksi 41p, Andrezinho 88)*
Melbourne Victory 1
(Kewell 67)
Crowd: 12,000 at nib Stadium

Central Coast Mariners 3
(McBreen 15', Kwasnik 74', Rose 78')
Adelaide United 2
(Van Dijk 16', Djite 19')
Crowd: 7,478 at Bluetongue Stadium, Gosford

TOP GOAL SCORERS

11 - Besart Berisha (Roar)
8- Shane Smeltz (Glory),
7- Matt Simon (Mariners) Ryan Griffiths (Jets), Archie Thompson (Victory),
6- Carlos Hernandez (Victory), Jeremy Brockie (Jets), Mate Dugandzic (Heart), Mitch Nichols (Roar),
5 - Patrick Zwaanswijk (Mariners)

Kiwi international Shane Smeltz has recaptured his touch in front of goal.

A-LEAGUE TEAM OF THE WEEK ROUND 18

Compiled by Steven Talevski

GK: Mathew Ryan – Although the Mariners stopper conceded two goals, the youngster was a standout out this weekend denying Sergio van Dijk and Nigel Boogaard with two fantastic saves.

RB: Manny Muscat – The Maltese international scored his first goal in the A-League in Wellington's second straight win away from home as he signed a two year contract extension with the Phoenix.

CB: Mohamed Adnan – A deflection off the defender may have resulted in conceding a goal but he surely made up for that accident later in the game with two important blocks to help Brisbane earn a point at AAMI Park.

CB: Bas van den Brink – The Dutchman had a great game in defence for the Glory as he gave no space to the opposition strikers in the smashing of Melbourne Victory.

LB: Aziz Behich – The youngster had another impressive performance where he was unlucky not to find himself on the score sheet. Behich's current form has earned him praise with Heart manager John van't Schip saying Behich is well on his way to the reaching the Socceroos squad.

RM: Karol Kisel – Kisel began Sydney FC's comeback with a clever volley to equalise the scores in the 71st minute before supplying Bruno Cazarine with a great cross to hand the sky blues the three points.

CM: Osama Malik – The former North Queensland Fury midfielder had a superb game for Adelaide United making a number of interceptions and some great tackling in the centre of the park.

LM: Thomas Broich – Broich may not have been at full fitness in his first start from coming back from an injury but the German had a fantastic game and was only denied to be on the score sheet due to a typical Clint Bolton performance.

RW: Mile Sterjovski – The former Socceroo set up Shane Smeltz for Perth's opener before slotting in a penalty in a man of the match performance.

ST: Shane Smeltz – The striker slotted in Glory's first two goals in their dominant 4-1 victory over Melbourne Victory.

LW: Ben Halloran – The youngster continues to be a shining light for the Gold Coast with another great attacking performance which was topped off with a great strike to open the scoring at the SFS.

Star Man

Mile Sterjovski
Perth Glory

The former Socceroo had trouble breaking into the Perth Glory squad at the start of the season but has been one of the players that have turned their season around in recent weeks.
Sterjovski has terrorised opposition teams on the right wing which was seen this past week with a tremendous game against Melbourne Victory.
The Ex Lille and Basel winger helped Shane Smeltz break the deadlock early at the NIB Stadium as he pinpointed a cross to the New Zealand international to open the scoring.
Sterjovski slotted in a penalty later in the first half and was denied of another goal a number of times by Victory goalkeeper Ante Covic.

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Futsalroos train-on squad announced

Qantas Futsalroos Head Coach Steven Knight has named a 24-man train-on squad following the recent 2012 FFA National Futsal Championships to prepare for the upcoming AFC Futsal Championship 2012 – ASEAN qualifiers which will be held in Bangkok, Thailand from 21-26 February 2012.

Knight believes that from the group of players that his coaching staff have identified he will be able to form a squad that will be successful at the ASEAN qualifiers..

"From the group we have selected, we have a very good balance of youth and experience," said Knight

"We will have a number of training sessions over the next couple of weeks before the final selection is made later next month.

"We know that our opposition in ASEAN is always improving and we are expecting some very tough matches, but I believe that the boys will be up to the challenge," concluded Knight .

The Qantas Futsalroos have been placed alongside Cambodia, Malaysia and Vietnam in Group B of the ASEAN qualifiers for the AFC Futsal Championship 2012.

The Qantas Futsalroos opening match of the tournament will be against Cambodia on 21 February (kick-off 4:30pm local, 8:30pm AEDT), followed by Malaysia on 22 February (kick-off 7:00pm local, 11:00pm AEDT) with their last group match against Vietnam on 23 February (kick-off 5:00pm local, 9:00pm AEDT).

The top three teams from the ASEAN qualifiers will progress to the AFC Futsal Championships 2012 which will be held in the United Arab Emirates in May.

Futsalroo Train-on

Shervin Adeli *Enfield Rovers NSW*
John Barrientos *North Melb VIC*
Jarrod Basger *Maccabi Hakoah NSW*
Alastair Bruce *Dural Warriors NSW*
George Cattanach *Boomerangs FS ACT*
Robbie Cattanach *Boomerangs FS ACT*
Roger Cua *ACT Cobras ACT*
Fernando De Moraes *Nth Melb VIC*
Miles Downie *Sydney City Eagles NSW*
Daniel Foggarty *West City NSW*
Daniel Fulton *Boomerangs FS ACT*
Greg Giovenali *Dural Warriors NSW*
Andres Gomez *Sydney City Eagles NSW*
Renagi Ingram *No current Club QLD*
Simon Keith *Campbelltown Quake NSW*
Raymond Miller *Sydney C Eagles NSW*
Danny Ngaluafe *No current Club QLD*
Gavin O'Brien *Campbelltown NSW*
Tobias Seeto *Dural Warriors NSW*
Peter Spathis *Sydney City Eagles NSW*
Keiran Stroh *Boomerangs FS ACT*
Mark Symington *CampbelltownNSW*
Lachlan Wright *Enfield Rovers NSW*
Chris Zeballos *Sydney City Eagles NSW*

Vidmar names Qantas Australian Under 23s squad

Qantas Australian Under 23s Head Coach Aurelio Vidmar has selected a 20-player squad for the upcoming AFC Asian Qualifiers for the 2012 London Games – Third Round matches against Uzbekistan and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Adelaide United defender Antony Golec and Melbourne Victory midfielder Isaka Cernak get their first call-up for this round of the qualification campaign along with Brisbane Roar midfielder Rocco Visconte who has recovered from a hamstring injury that has kept him out of squad for the last three matches.

Sydney FC midfielder Terry Antonis has been included in the Qantas Australian U23s squad, subject to passing a fitness test prior to departure. Depending on the outcome of Antonis' fitness test, either Mustafa Amini or Bernie Ibini from the Central Coast Mariners will be added to the squad.

Overseas based striker Kerem Bulut also receives his first ever selection in a Qantas Australian U23s squad having previously made appearances for the Qantas Joeys and Qantas Young Socceroos.

Discussions are also ongoing to add other overseas-based players, Aaron Mooy (St Mirren, Scotland), Tommy Oar (FC Utrceht, Netherlands) and Mathew Leckie (Borussia Monchengladbach, Germany), to the Qantas Australian U23s squad for the UAE match on 22 February with their club commitments making them definitely unavailable for the Uzbekistan match.

Melbourne Victory's Isaka Cernak gets his first call-up.

The majority of the Qantas Australian Under 23s will depart Australia on 29 January for a pre-match camp in the UAE before heading to Tashkent to face Uzbekistan. . The Qantas Australian U23s will then return to the UAE for a training camp to prepared for their next qualification match against the UAE. The training camp will also include a friendly match against the Philippines senior national team.

The teams in each group of the third round of qualifying play in a home-and-away format from 21 September 2011, to 14 March 14, 2012, with the winner of each group directly qualifying for the London 2012 Olympic Games Football competition.

The three second-placed teams from the third round will clash in a playoff at a centralised venue from March 25 to 29, 2012, and the winners of this group will meet the representatives of CAF (Africa) for a berth in the 2012 London Olympic Games.

Under 23 Squad

Terry ANTONIS *Sydney FC*
Aziz BEHICH *Melbourne Heart*
Mark BIRIGHITTI *(gk) Adelaide United*
Oliver BOZANIC *Central Coast Mariners*
Kerem BULUT *Boleslav, Czech Republic*
Isaka CERNAK*Melbourne Victory*
Mate DUGANDZIC *Melbourne Heart*
Diogo FERREIRA *Melbourne Victory*
Matthew FOSCHINI *Melbourne Victory*
Antony GOLEC *Adelaide United*
Jason HOFFMAN *Melbourne Heart*
Matthew JURMAN *Brisbane Roar*
Ben KANTAROVSKI *Newcastle Jets*
Daniel MULLEN *Adelaide United*
Mitch NICHOLS *Brisbane Roar*
Dimitrios PETRATOS *Sydney FC*
Sebastian RYALL *Sydney FC*
Mathew RYAN *(gk) CC Mariners*
Adam TAGGART *Perth Glory*
Rocco VISCONTE *Brisbane Roar*

Stand by players
Mustafa AMINI Central Coast Mariners
Bernie IBINI Central Coast Mariners

DODD EYES GOLD RETURN

By Jenna Stummer

Perth Glory forward, Travis Dodd, is disappointed he'll miss this Sunday's clash against his former club Adelaide United at Hindmarsh stadium because of injury.

Dodd, a former Reds captain, will miss his second game in a row due to a small abdominal tear.

"I was a little upset I guess, but we get to play them again in March so I'm making sure I'm ready for that one," Dodd said.

In fact, Dodd hopes to be fit for Perth Glory's next home game, a Monday night special against Gold Coast United on February 6.

"It's coming along really well. I had a week pretty much of rest doing bike rehab, but this week I've started running and it's responding really well. "So on track at this stage for the Gold Coast game.

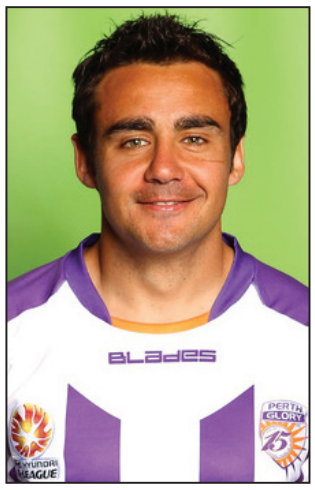
"I'll hopefully start training with the squad again after the Adelaide game, and looking at being available then."

It's been a frustrating run for the former Socceroo after a hamstring injury which also sidelined him for four games.

"It certainly is, especially when the team are playing so well at the moment.

"You look at the Melbourne Victory game sitting in the stands; it's those types of games that you really want to be part of."

Upset not to face John Kosmina's resurgent side this weekend, Dodd has paid tribute to his former coach for reviving Adelaide's fortunes.



Travis Dodd

"They're off to a great start under Kossie, only losing one game since he's been back, so they've certainly turned their form around.

"Our style of play and the way we've been going the last six or seven weeks has been great especially after last weekend's result the confidence is high among the group.

"I'm sure we can go over there expecting to do well and pick up a result."

Perth Glory currently are fifth on the ladder and only one point away from fourth position. After the Adelaide fixture, Perth Glory will have a five of the final eight games of the season at nib Stadium.

Australian U23s to play final Asian qualifier for London 2012 Olympic Games at Central Coast Stadium

Gosford has secured the right to host an AFC Asian qualifier for the London 2012 Olympic Games when the Qantas Australian U23s plays Iraq U23s on 14 March, Minister for the Central Coast, Chris Hartcher announced.

The match is part of the international football package announced by the NSW Government through Destination NSW and Football Federation Australia in August 2011.

The international football package includes two Qantas Australian U23s qualifiers for the London 2012 Olympic Games, one of which is to be played in regional NSW. The first of which was played last November at Parramatta Stadium and the second is to be played at the Central Coast Stadium in Gosford.

Mr Hartcher said the announcement that Gosford would host the Qantas Australian U23s v Iraq U23s was a fantastic achievement for the region and an exciting addition to the 2012 NSW Events Calendar.

"This is great news for the Central Coast and reflects the NSW Government's desire to take international football to as many parts of the State as possible.

"Pending the outcome of other London 2012 qualifiers during February in Australia's group, the match against Iraq could be crucial to our hopes of London 2012 qualification.

"The NSW Government is committed to supporting events in regional NSW as they play an important role in driving tourism and generating economic benefit for the State and local community," he said.

The area's local members joined Minister Hartcher's enthusiasm for the match.

"Central Coast football fans will be keen to support the Australian U23s in large numbers on their qualification pathway to this year's London Olympic Games," Member for Wyong, Darren Webber said.

Member for The Entrance Chris Spence said, "it is international events such as these which help place the Central Coast on the event destination map and as a great place to visit."

Member for Gosford Chris Holstein said Central Coast Stadium is a fitting venue for the qualifier.

"The stadium can hold up to 20,000 spectators and has played host to international rugby union, National Rugby League and Hyundai A-League matches, boxing, motor cross and open-air rock concerts as well as a multitude of local sporting and community events," he said.

Football Federation Australia Chief Executive Officer Ben Buckley was greatly appreciative of the support from the NSW Government for this match and other football events within the state.

"The support from the NSW Government for these Olympic Games qualification matches and the Qantas Socceroos 2014 FIFA World Cup Asian Qualifiers provides fans with fantastic opportunities for them to support our national teams at top quality stadiums.

"The Central Coast area in particular has a great tradition of supporting our national teams when they have played at Central Coast Stadium, and I'm sure that our upcoming match against Iraq will be no different," concluded Buckley.

Tickets for the match will go on sale from 9am Friday 3 February from Ticketek with members of the Football Family and registered players receiving a 50% discount when pre-purchasing.

Upcoming Matches

AFC Asian Qualifiers for the 2012 London Games – Third Round
Uzbekistan v Qantas Australian U23s
Jar Stadium, Tashkent, Uzbekistan
Sunday, 5 February 2012
Kick-off: 8:00pm local (2:00 am AEDT)

International Friendly Match
Qantas Australian U23s v Philippines
Zabeel Stadium, Dubai
Thursday 16 February 2012
Kick-off: 7.30pm local (2:30am AEDT)

AFC Asian Qualifiers for the 2012 London Games – Third Round
UAE v Qantas Australian U23s
Mohammed Bin Zayed Stadium, Abu Dhabi, UAE
Wednesday, 22 February 2012
Kick-off: 5:30pm local (00:30am AEDT)

AFC Asian Qualifiers for the 2012 London Games – Third Round
Qantas Australian U23s v Iraq
Central Coast Stadium, Gosford
Wednesday, 14 March 2012
Kick-off: 7:30pm
Gates Open 6.30pm

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Muscat Magic wins it for Wellington

Newcastle Jets

0

Wellington Phoenix

1

Match Details

Newcastle Jets 0
Wellington Phoenix 1 (Sanchez 58')
At Ausgrid Stadium, Newcastle.
Kick Off: 8pm (AEDT)
Referee: Jared Gillett
Crowd: 11,694

Newcastle Jets: 1. Ben Kennedy (Gk), 2. Taylor Regan, 4. Nikolai Topor-Stanley, 6. Ben Kantarovski, 8. Jeremy Brockie, 9. Michael Bridges (22. Ali Abbas 75') 10. Ruben Zadkovich, 11. Tarek Elrich (14. Labinot Haliti 65'), 13. Byun Sung-Hwan, 23. Ryan Griffiths, 25. Jacob Pepper (12. Jobe Wheelhouse 65')

Substitutes Not Used: Matthew Nash (Gk)
Yellow Cards: Elrich 49', Wheelhouse 74', Zadkovich 79'
Red Cards: Nil

Wellington Phoenix: 1. Mark Paston (Gk), 2. Manny Muscat, 3. Tony Lochhead, 6. Tim Brown, 8. PauL Ifill (11. Daniel 90+2) 9. Chris Greenacre, 12. Nick Ward (7. Leo Bertos 65') 18. Ben Sigmund, 21. Dani Sanchez (19. Jimmy Downey 87') 22. Andrew Durante, 24. Alex Smith

Substitutes Not Used: 20. Tony Warner (Gk)
Yellow Cards: Nil
Red Cards: Nil

By Shaun Dyas

The Wellington Phoenix inflicted the Newcastle Jets with their third home loss of the season in a 1-0 victory at Ausgrid Stadium.

A piece of sublime finishing from Phoenix right back Manny Muscat in the 58th minute was the difference in a rugged and physical tussle from the opening whistle.

Phoenix talisman Paul Ifill was the man who started the move which led to the game's only goal. He picked up possession in midfield and played the ball into the path of the marauding full back who quickly and skilfully cut inside Byun Sung-Hwan on the edge of the area. Muscat then curled a sweet left footed shot from 15 yards that left Newcastle keeper Ben Kennedy with absolutely no chance, nestling in the top corner of the net.

The win has enabled the Phoenix to leapfrog the stuttering Melbourne Heart into third position on the ladder and has stamped the Kiwis as genuine finals contenders after securing their second successive away victory.

Earlier in the evening, the vocal crowd of 11,694 was firmly behind their team and creating an electric atmosphere inside the stadium. This did not stop the Phoenix from nearly subduing the Novocastrian faithful in the 7th minute.

A long clearance was played up-field and Newcastle centre back Nikolai Topor-Stanley was caught unaware and misjudged the flight of the ball. Evergreen Wellington striker Chris Greenacre was first to react and smashed a shot at Kennedy from 15 yards which the keeper managed to beat away for a corner. From the ensuing corner Phoenix midfielder Tim Brown headed just over the bar.

It was then Newcastle's turn to begin to exert sustained pressure on the visitors defence and they created a decent opportunity in the 16th minute. Byun found himself in acres of space on the left edge and curled in a cross which was met on the volley by Jets front man Ryan Griffiths. The striker could not connect cleanly with the ball and only managed to spray a wild shot over the bar.

Two minutes later, the home side should have taken the lead. A Byun corner was fired into the area and the towering Topor-Stanley managed to divert the header into the path of Striker Jeremy Brockie. Approaching the by-line, the kiwi skilfully flicked the ball back into the path of midfielder Ben Kantarovski who only succeeded in smashing his volley over the bar from the edge of the six yard box.

Tarek Elrich was brilliantly denied by Wellington keeper Mark Paston in the 24th minute. Griffiths attempted to stand the ball up to the back post but the cross was cleared by the Wellington defence straight to Elrich who was lurking just outside the box. He controlled the ball before hammering a volley from 20 yards that was only kept out by the outstretched fingertips of Paston.

The rest of the half consisted of a few half chances for either side, one falling to Ifill for the visitors and another to Brockie for the home side. Both teams went into the sheds knowing that they would have to do more to take victory in what was becoming an increasingly tense affair.

Dani Sanchez almost brought the game to life a minute after the restart. An attempted cross was blocked by the Jets defence and fell for the Spaniard who attempted an audacious volley from just inside the left edge of the area on the tightest of angles. Kennedy watched on desperately as the ball drifted just wide of his left upright rather than into the net for what would have been one of the goals of the season.

It was next the Jets turn to test the Phoenix in the 53rd minute. Elrich ran at and beat two flimsy attempted tackles from the visitors before striking a swerving drive on the goal of Paston. The 25 yard effort surprised the Phoenix gloveman with its dip and power but he managed to fist it clear for a corner.

After the Phoenix goal, Newcastle were increasingly desperate but were unable to create any significant opportunities as they were continually thwarted by a committed and organised Wellington unit.

It was actually the Phoenix who should have iced the game in the 83rd minute through Sanchez. The tireless Ifill found himself free on the counter and crossed to the edge of the 6 yard box for the unmarked Sanchez. The Spaniard was guilty of being too casual with his effort as he somehow side-footed wide with the goal at his mercy.

Newcastle coach Gary Van Egmond was disappointed after the game at his team's inability to create chances.

"We're just a little bit devoid of ideas in that front third. If you play against a team like Wellington they will make you pay and that's exactly what happened," he said.

Newcastle have little time to regroup as they face Adelaide United on Wednesday in Bathurst as part of the A-League's Community round initiative. Wellington returns home to Westpac stadium next Sunday for a clash with the Melbourne Heart, buoyed by their first back-to-back away wins in A-League history.

Match Stats

2	Saves	5
5	Attempts on target	3
9	Attempts off target	9
56%	Possession	44%
5	Corners	3
4	Offsides	2
14	Fouls committed	6

Phoenix mob Manny Muscat after the Maltese international scored the winner, and his first HAL goal. Photo: PETER NEVILLE

Jeremy Brockie (Jets) gives chase and is on Nick Ward's tail.
Photo: BEN NEVILLE

Mark Paston punches clear as Rostyn Griffiths flies high.
Photo: BEN NEVILLE

Mariners they've got the 'Right Stuff'

CC Mariners 3

Adelaide United 2

Match Details

Central Coast Mariners 3 (McBreen 15', Kwasnik 74', Rose 78')
Adelaide United 2 (Van Dijk 16', Djite 19')
Referee: Kris GRIFFITH-JONES
Crowd: 7,478 at Bluetongue Stadium, Gosford

Central Coast Mariners: 1. Mathew Ryan (Gk), 2. Daniel Mcbreen, 3. Joshua Rose, 4. Pedj Bojic, 6. Patrick Zwaanswijk, 7.John Hutchinson (11. Oliver Bozanic 61'), 8. Rostyn Griffiths, 9. Bernie Ibini (23. Adam Kwasnik 56'), 14. Michael Mcglinchey, 17. Tomas Rogic (12. Troy Hearfield 67'), 18. Alex Wilkinson (C)

Subs Not Used: 20. Justin Pasfield (Gk)
Yellow Cards: Rose 28', Hutchinson 59'
Red Cards: None

Adelaide United: 1. Eugene Galekovic (Gk), 2. Osama Malik, 3. Nigel Boogaard, 5. Daniel Mullen, 7. ZeNon Caravella, 9. Serginho Van Dijk, 10. Dario Vidosic, 11. Bruce Djite (17. Iain Ramsay 74'). 12, Antony Golec, 14. Cameron Watson, 18. Fabian Barbiero (15. Jacob Melling 59')

Subs Not Used: 20. Mark Birighitti (Gk), 21. Francisco Usucar
Yellow Cards: Vidosic 79'
Red Cards: None

By Adrian Deans

Did we just see a Championship performance?

It would be a surprise indeed, at this stage, for the Mariners not to take the premiership – but the Grand Final is the one they want. Three times in the Grand Final and three times a bridesmaid – could 2012 finally be the year of the Mariner?

There were so many questions and issues going into this game. Would the Kossie Bubble finally burst? Would the Mariners continue to struggle up front without Matt Simon? Why was Amini being rested?

The big surprise was learning that young Tom Rogic was in the Mariners' starting eleven. Rogic is the fellow who beat 75,000 international applicants to win a spot in the Nike Chance Academy and would now be playing for Reading if not prevented by passport issues. After hearing he'd scored a hat trick for the youth team last week, I was hoping to see Rogic shortly off the bench, but to get to the ground and find he was starting was a big surprise.

Rogic plays in the front third and heaven knows the Mariners need a new cutting edge. Ibini has not been as effective without Matt Simon doing all the donkey work up front and Amini has struggled without Rostyn Griffiths winning the ball in the midfield. Griffiths was back for this one but Amini was given a rest.

As for the Kossie Bubble? The first half was all Adelaide, although it didn't exactly start that way. After a few nice touches from Rogic to titillate to the home crowd, the Mariners went ahead through an excellent run and cross by Pedj Bojic who found the head of Daniel McBreen in the 15th minute.

Joshua Rose clinches full points for the Mariners in a five goal epic. Photo: KAREN DOUGLAS

Mariners fans didn't have long to celebrate. Almost immediately afterwards, Barbiero's cross picked out Sergio van Dijk on the far post who cut back inside Patrick Zwaanswijk and did what so few strikers have been able to do in recent weeks – beat Mat Ryan.

If that wasn't bad enough, only minutes later a long throw from Cameron Watson found Bruce Djite who, with his back to goal, brilliantly lobbed the ball over his shoulder, swivelled and volleyed past Ryan. We hear so much about Djite's promise but don't see enough result. This was just a glimpse, but he had a couple of easier chances straight afterwards and couldn't add to his tally.

After that, Adelaide largely controlled the game until half time – Caravella, Watson, Barbiero and van Dijk were impressive, forming some excellent combinations that would surely have yielded better results against any but the league's tightest defence. Benie Ibini had a chance to bring the Mariners back level in first half injury time after an excellent run but fired straight at Galekovic.

Immediately afterwards, Bruce Djite's pile-driven shot pounded off the chest of Mat Ryan who then did very well to smother the follow up effort of Dario Vidosic. It could so easily have been 3 – 1 seconds after it should have been 2 – 2. But it finished 2 – 1 at half time, which was about right on the balance of play. We hadn't seen much of Rogic but we had seen a masterful performance from Adelaide, who looked comfortable and confident in Kossie's system.

Half time killed the Reds. In the second half, they did not control anywhere near as much possession and the Mariners' wide defenders started getting forward into their trademark attacking positions. McGlinchey got away down the right in the 52nd minute and Ibini should have done better from the cross, but glanced it wide and was promptly replaced by Adam Kwasnik.

Kwasnik had come on to score the winner against Heart midweek, and proved effective again in this game. He controlled the ball superbly from Bozanic's cross in the 74th minute and drilled the ball past Galekovic for a deserved 2 – 2 scoreline.

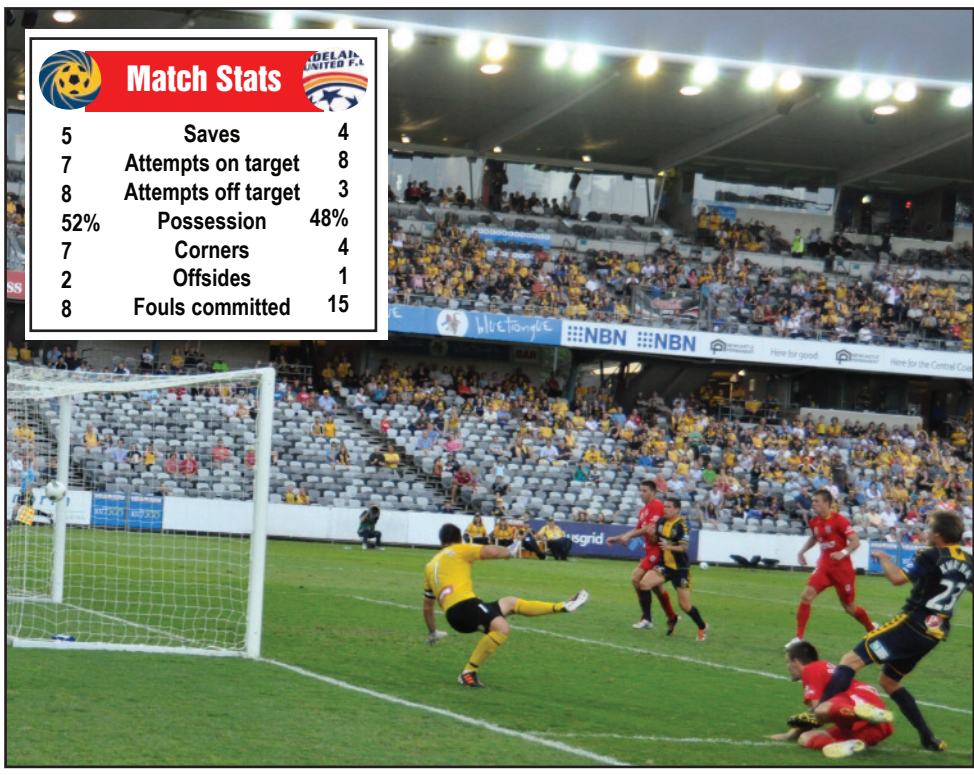
Then we saw the main talking point of the game – an amazing point blank save from Mat Ryan was deflected onto the post, bounced along the goal line and then required another dive back on the ball just before it crossed. The Mariners then went straight up the other end for Josh Rose to hit the winner after Hearfield's cross was blocked by Galekovic.

Heartbreaking stuff for Adelaide, who would have beaten most teams on this performance, but the Mariners, despite a game midweek, look like they've finally adjusted to the loss of Matt Simon.

They are a very good team indeed and will require a lot of stopping if they are not finally to the bride at this year's grand final.

Adrian Deans is the author of Mr Cleansheets – published by Vulgar Press, distributed by Dennis Jones and Associates and available in all good book stores. ebook also available at www.mrcleansheets.com

Daniel McBreen scores with a header to open the scoring for the Mariners. Photo: KAREN DOUGLAS



Match Stats

5	Saves	4
7	Attempts on target	8
8	Attempts off target	3
52%	Possession	48%
7	Corners	4
2	Offsides	1
8	Fouls committed	15

Adam Kwasnik's effort squeezes inside the far post from an acute angle. Photo: KAREN DOUGLAS

Brisbane withstand Heart pressure test

By Daniel Quinn

Melbourne Heart 1
Brisbane Roar 1

Match Details

Melbourne Heart 1
(Jonaton Germano 31')
Brisbane Roar 1 (Besart Berisha 70')
Venue: AAMI Park
Referee: Chris Beath
Attendance: 7118

Melbourne Heart: 1. Clint Bolton, 2. Michael Marrone, 3. Brendan Hamill (4. Simon Colosimo 82'), 6. Matt Thompson, 8. Kristian Sarkies (7. Rutger Worm, 84'), 11. Alex Terra, 13. Jonatan Germano, 16. Aziz Behich, 17. Jason Hoffman, 18. Curtis Good, 19. Eli Babalj (15. David Williams, 73') 23. Mate Dugandzic,

Unused substitutes: 30. Sebastian Mattei
Yellow cards: Jonaton Germano 42'
Red cards: Nil

Brisbane Roar: 1. Michael Theoklitos, 2. Matt Smith, 3. Shane Stefanutto, 5. Ivan Franjic, 6. Erik Paartalu (21. James Meyer 62'), 7. Besart Berisha, 8. Massimo Murdocca, 11. Issey Nakajima-Farran (10. Henrique 46'), 16. Mohamed Adnan, 17. Mitch Nichols, 22. Thomas Broich (4. Matt Jurman 84').

Unused substitutes: 20. Andrew Redmayne
Yellow cards: Issey Nakajima-Farran 21', Henrique 61', Massimo Murdocca 90'
Red cards: Nil

Melbourne Heart have held a strong Brisbane Roar who had to come back from a goal behind to claim a point at AAMI Park on Saturday night.

Germano took the lead on 31 minutes before Berisha equalised in the second-half. In a fair encounter Heart had the better chances but Roar did get into great positions without the final finish.

Melbourne Heart coach John van 't Schip makes three changes from their midweek late defeat to Central Coast with Eli Babalj, Mate Dugandzic and Kristian Sarkies coming in for Jason Hoffman, Rutger Worm and David Williams. Ange Postecoglou made one change from their win over Sydney with Rocco Visconte making way for German star Thomas Broich.

Both sides started off with a high paced game with Brendan Hamill blocking Broich's effort before Michael Theoklitos easily saved Babalj's long effort.

On 10 minutes Broich did well with some good foot work before the ball fell for Massimo Murdocca but the small midfielder's curling effort curled wide.

Heart went straight up the other end and Alex Terra beat the offside trap before rounded Theoklitos but the Brazilian's effort crossed the face of goal.

On 24 minutes Heart had their best chance of the opening stages. Aziz Behich played a great one-two with Matt Thompson before crossing into the near post but Terra poked his effort wide.

Two minutes later Sarkies put in a brilliant corner for Babalj at the far post but the tall forward's header was hit into the ground and bounced over the net.

Half-way through the first half Behich crossed for Terra whose athletic effort was blocked by Mohamed Anan but Germano followed up with a header to take the lead for the hosts.

Brisbane looked for an equaliser immediately with Issey Nakajima-Farran but his long effort travelled wide of Clint Bolton's net.

Not long before half-time Germano handled in the box and Chris Beath awarded a penalty. But Berisha skied the penalty over the bar.

Heart went up the other end not long later but Behich scuffed the finish.

The high tempo continued with Broich causing havoc down the left. The German was found in the box by Stefanutto but he too skied his effort.

Only a couple minutes later Broich shot powerfully but Bolton parried. Murdocca then shot the follow up effort wide.

Just before half-time Adnan shot with his left-foot but Bolton got down quickly to save. A great half of Football ended off 1-0 to the Heart.

Three minutes into the second-half Ivan Franjic crossed a great low ball for Broich at the far post but the German midfielder fired over.

On 56 minutes Terra found Germano on the edge of the box and the Argentine's effort was saved well by Theoklitos before the ball hit the base of the upright.

Babalj was next to test Theoklitos but his left-footed effort was hit directly at the 'keeper.

Adnan then had another free-kick chance after last week's stunning strike but Bolton saved comfortably.

On 69 minutes Berisha scored an equaliser. Franjic crossed to Mitch Nichols whose flick-up was headed home by Berisha right on the goal line.

Three minutes later Brisbane was looking to take the lead but Nichols' effort was hit wide.

Terra almost took the lead for the hosts after Behich's low cross but Theoklitos saved.

Behich was causing problems for the Roar defence when he made a great run into the box but his shot was blocked by Adnan.

In stoppage time Heart were looking for a winner with Terra and Thompson. But Adnan blocked Terra before Matt Smith bravely blocked Thompson's powerful drive.

Heart remain winless in five games while Roar remain in second place with Heart dropping to fourth after Wellington's win over Newcastle.

Heart supporters are up on their feet after Jonaton Germano scores against the champs. Photo: TIM SIZE

Match Stats

5	Saves	8
12	Attempts on target	7
6	Attempts off target	12
42%	Possession	58%
3	Corners	6
2	Offsides	2
12	Fouls committed	9

Jonaton Germano does a jig after opening the scoring. Photo: ANITA MILAS

Besart Berisha continues to be in the headlines after coming up trumps for the Roar with this close range header.. Photo: TIM SIZE

Late SFC show shatters Gold Coast

Sydney FC 2

Gold Coast United 1

Match Details

Sydney FC 2 (Karol Kisel 70, Bruno Cazarine 89)
Gold Coast United 1 (Ben Halloran 54)
Sydney Football Stadium
Crowd: 8,541
Referee: Strebre Delovski

Sydney FC: 1. Liam Reddy, 4. Pascal Bosschaart, 5. Michael Beauchamp, 7. Brett Emerton (2. Sebastian Ryall '92), 8. Karol Kisel, 10 Nick Carle (11. Dimi Petratos '76), 15. Terry McFlynn (c), 17. Terry Antonis (9. Bruno Cazarine '60), 19. Mark Bridge, 21. Scott Jamieson, 23. Rhyan Grant.

Sub not used: 20. Ivan Necevski.
Yellow cards: Brett Emerton 64, Rhyan Grant 72, Dimi Petratos 84
Red cards: Nil

Gold Coast: 20. Jerrad Tyson, 3. Michael Thwaite, 5. Kristian Rees, 13. Ante Rozic (23. Dylan McGowan '82), 14. Ben Halloran, 15. Adam Traore, 17. Chris Harrold (32. Chris Lucas '81), 18. James Brown, 22. Peter Jungschlager, 24. Jonas Salley, 29. Mitch Bevan (28. Daniel Bowles '38).

Sub not used: 40.Chris O'Connor (gk).
Yellow cards: Nil
Red cards: Nil

By Mike Salter

With a Bruno Cazarine goal in the 89th minute, Sydney FC finally broke their long winless streak and maintained their place in the league's top six, consigning Miron Bleiberg's Gold Coast side to yet another defeat.

It was a much-depleted Gold Coast line-up which took to the field at Aussie Stadium, with Dylan McAllister, Maceo Rigters and Maicon all absent. Sydney, for their part, were glad to have Pascal Bosschaart back from suspension, although the big defender didn't have the best of afternoons.

The home side almost scored in only the second minute, when a Brett Emerton free kick beat Jerrad Tyson but came back off the left-hand post. Terry Antonis tried to chest the rebound home, but this time Tyson was there to gather.

The opening exchanges of the game were somewhat scrappy, with the visitors looking disjointed; Peter Jungschlager in particular looked ill at ease in an unfamiliar right wing-back role. On 17 minutes, however, Gold Coast found the woodwork as well, Jonas Salley heading onto the bar from James Brown's free kick, in the midst of poor Sydney marking.

Nick Carle and Rhyan Grant both put shots on target for Sydney around the half-way point of the first period, but Tyson did well to save on both occasions. On 27 minutes, an even better opportunity arrived for the hosts when a neat one-two between Carle and Mark Bridge set Karol Kisel through on goal on the right. The Slovakian took one touch too many, and Tyson managed to save the eventual shot with his legs.

The rest of the half was distinctly forgettable. Daniel Bowles, on as a substitute for a struggling Mitchell Bevan, forced Liam Reddy into a save in injury time after a surging run down the right wing. Both coaches, one imagines, would have had harsh words for their charges at the break, as the quality of the football had left much to be desired.

It was the away side which broke the deadlock ten minutes into the second half. Following a chance for Scott Jamieson at the other end, Jungschlager forced his way down the Gold Coast right and put in a cross at an awkward height; slipping in unmarked at the far post, young Ben Halloran took the ball on the half-volley, and placed his shot deftly between Reddy and the post to give his team the lead.

On the hour, Sydney had two good chances to equalise in quick succession. When Antonis crossed from the right, a jab of the heel from Bridge forced Ante Rozic to clear off the line, and the Gold Coast defender repeated the feat from the resulting corner, deflecting Nick Carle's sweetly-struck left-footer over the bar.

Sydney began to apply the pressure more convincingly, and on 71 minutes they were rewarded with a somewhat bizarre goal to level matters. Bosschaart's long throw from the left eluded a crowd of bemused Gold Coast defenders, but not Kisel, whose lunging left-footed volley flew past Tyson and into the back of the net.

Halloran responded for the visitors by cutting inside and stinging Reddy's hands two minutes after the goal, but the momentum was now with Sydney. Bridge found himself free on the left on 80 minutes, but once again Tyson did well to get down to block the Sydney striker's effort.

Just as the hosts' initiative appeared to be petering out, the decisive goal arrived. Kisel was at the heart of things again, tricking his way down the right and sending in a perfect cross. Bruno Cazarine, who had replaced Antonis earlier in the half, was back to his predatory best on this occasion, powering a header past a stranded Tyson.

Cazarine should have had another when Bridge's pass left him one-on-one with Tyson in injury time, but the Brazilian shot weakly. It did not matter: Sydney had come from behind to beat the Gold Coast for the second time this season, and Vitezslav Lavicka could finally afford a satisfied smile at the final whistle.

Match Stats

4	Saves	9
13	Attempts on target	6
4	Attempts off target	3
59%	Possession	41%
14	Corners	8
4	Offsides	2
12	Fouls committed	10

Supersub! SFC's Bruno Cazarine heads home in the final stages of the match to shatter Gold Coast. Photo: GEOFF JONES

SFC players finally get that winning feeling again after a recent barren run. Photo: GEOFF JONES

SFC's Nick Carle lays off a pass as Gold Coast's Daniel Bowles slides in with the tackle. Photo: GEOFFJONES

Glory rolls back the years in Victory rampage

Perth Glory 4

Melbourne Victory 1

Match Details

Perth Glory 4 (Smeltz 13, 34p, Sterjovksi 41p, Andrezinho 88)
Melbourne Victory 1 (Kewell 67)
Crowd: 12,000 at nib Stadium

Perth Glory: 1.D.Vukovic, 3.B.Van Den Brink, 5.S.Pantelidis, 7.J.Burns, 9.S.Smeltz (86.B.Mehmet 86'), 10.L.Miller, 14.S.McGarry (8.A.Hughes 69'), 16.E.Berger (27.Adrezinho 62'), 17.T.Howarth, 19.J.Risdon, 21.M.Sterjovski.

Yellow cards: Smeltz.
Red Cards: None

Melbourne Victory: 21.A.Covic, 2.M.Foschini, 6.L.Broxham, 7.M.Kemp, 10.A.Thompson (18.Allsopp 61'), 11.M.Rojas, 12.R.Vargas, 13.D.Ferreira (9.Solorzano 44'), 19.I.Cernak, 22.H.Kewell, 23.A.Leijer.

Yellow cards: Cernak, Kewell, Leijer.
Red cards: Allsopp

By Jarrod Ellis

Melbourne Victory's poor A-League campaign hit a new low on Sunday as they were annihilated 4-1 by a resurgent Glory side at nib Stadium in Perth.

A Shane Smeltz double and goals to Mile Sterjovski and Andrezinho capped a dominant Perth display in front of a season-high crowd of 12,358.

The bulk of those people would have been there to see Harry Kewell but instead were treated to the Glory's finest exhibition of football this season and one of their best in the A-League.

Although Kewell scored a second half penalty, he was one of many below par Victory players on a day where their fragile defence was regularly exposed and their attacking work-rate was poor.

To make matters worse, substitute striker Danny Allsopp received his marching orders for a studs-up tackle, while Kewell was lucky to stay on after a brutal first half tackle received only a yellow card and appeared to get away with two dives after the break.

Melbourne have now won just two of their past nine games, drifting four points outside the top six in the process, and their performance received a scathing assessment from new coach Jim Magilton.

"I was shocked," he said when asked about the standard of the performance. "We've learned painful lessons today.

"This is a man's game and unfortunately for us today, the men won."

Magilton said that "reality check" had helped to make it clear new faces were needed in the Victory camp, possibly even coming during the current transfer window.

"I think we need new faces. To change the mentality within the football club you need to change the mentality within the four rooms of the dressing room, the most important place in the club," he said.

"We've got into a bit of a rut and the sooner we can change personnel, the better.

"A new manager wants to bring new players in. There are a group of players there who have underachieved this year."

Life couldn't be more different for Perth though, with Ian Ferguson's side holding a six-point gap over the seventh-placed Victory after extending their unbeaten run to six games.

Even more impressively, the performance came on the back of a gruelling fortnight where they faced Wellington, Sydney and Melbourne Heart away.

Ferguson said he was delighted his side was capable of playing that well in their third game in little more than a week.

"It was one of the more pleasing games I've been in charge of," he said.

"I felt comfortable, I felt as though we were in charge for most of the game. I feel as though we're getting over the hump now.

"It's a credit to the boys that over the past five or six weeks we've put this run together ... I'm absolutely proud of every one of them."

Perth signalled their intentions early, with Josh Risdon, Smeltz and Sterjovski all going close before the New Zealand international fired his side in front in the 13th minute.

Sterjovski easily beat an out-of-sorts Matthew Kemp down the right flank and was able to cross to an unmarked Smeltz, who finished perfectly.

The Glory continued to control the contest after the opening goal and were rewarded again as they were given a penalty in bizarre circumstances.

Adrian Leijer had been warned about wrestling at a corner, but proceeded to rugby tackle Todd Howarth to the ground anyway and Peter Green blew his whistle for a decision Magilton described as "harsh".

Leijer's unbelievably foolish play allowed Smeltz to score his second and put the hosts in command.

Evan Berger, playing against his former side in his first Glory start, enjoyed an impressive first half and helped to earn his side another penalty when Matthew Foschini brought him to the ground for no apparent reason, although it appeared the foul may have started outside the box.

Smeltz didn't get the chance for his hat trick though as Sterjovski took this spot kick and sent it past Ante Covic.

Ferguson's men continued to have the ascendancy early in the second half, having several chances to add a fourth, but Melbourne got one back in a brief positive spell.

Steve Pantelidis' clumsy tackle on Jean Carlos Solorzano gave Green little choice but to call a penalty and Kewell converted.

After Allsopp's red card, Perth again took control and a move sparked by some Liam Miller brilliance was unfortunate not to end up in their fourth.

It mattered little, however, as just before stoppage time Andrezinho cruised past Foschini and finished impressively from a tough angle to send the strong home crowd into a frenzy.

Match Stats

Perth Glory		Melbourne Victory
1	Saves	2
7	Attempts on target	2
10	Attempts off target	2
51%	Possession	49%
9	Corners	2
1	Offsides	2
13	Fouls committed	11

Perth's Mile Sterjovski makes no mistake from the spot to make it 3-0. Photo: EDUARDO MORGAN

Glory's Steve McGarry has the inside advantage over Victory's Diogo Ferreira. Photo: EDUARDO MORGAN

Mile Sterjovski (Glory) puts Victory's Matthew Kemp under pressure. Photo: EDUARDO MORGAN

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Melbourne Victory v Sydney FC

Thur 26 Jan AAMI Park 4:00pm

Victory Line Up

2. Matthew Foschini
4. Petar Franjic
6. Leigh Broxham
7. Matthew Kemp
8. Grant Brebner
9. Jean Carlos Solorzano
10. Archie Thompson
11. Marco Rojas
12. Rodrigo Vargas
13. Diogo Ferreira
16.Carlos Hernandez
17, Jimmy Jeggo
18. Danny Allsopp
19. Isaka Cernak
20. Lawrence Thomas (GK)
21. Ante Covic (GK)
22. Harry Kewell
23. Adrian Leijer (c)
three to be omitted

In: 7. Matthew Kemp, 17. Jimmy Jeggo (both promoted)

Out: 3. Fabio (suspended), 14. Billy Celeski (groin), 15. Tom Pondeljak (back)

Unavailable: 14. Billy Celeski (groin), 15. Tom Pondeljak (back)

By John Clark

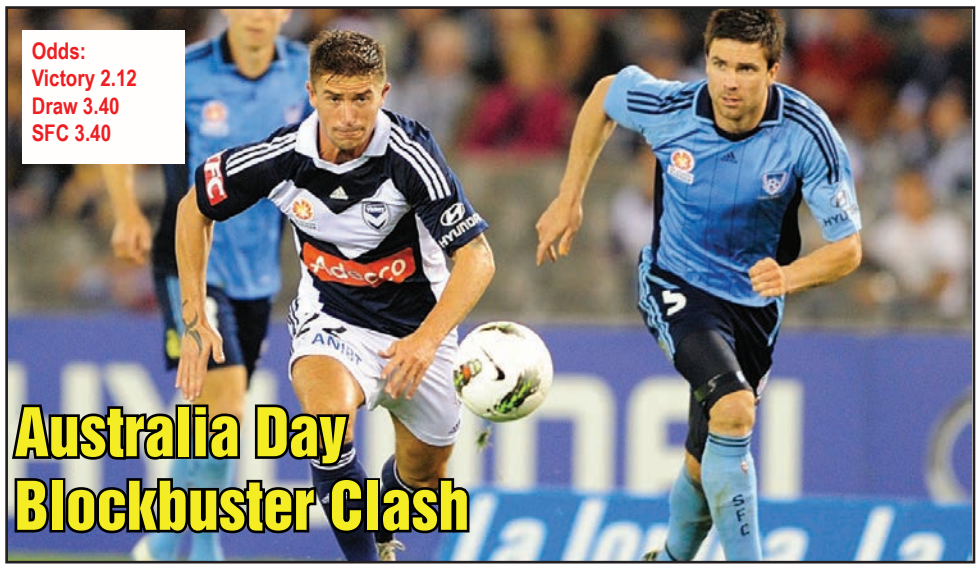
The Victory host Sydney FC on Australia Day in a blockbuster derby that will have massive ramifications for the losing side.

The Victory has a chance of redemption only four days after they were dismantled by a rampant Perth Glory at ME Bank Stadium.

The performance was substandard and the ill discipline that has tarnished the Victory's season was on display for all to see. The Glory opened the scoring early on when Mile Sterjovski got the better of Matthew Kemp and delivered a pin point cross for Shane Smeltz to turn home. In the 35th minute the lead was doubled after Adrian Leijer conceded a needless penalty after dragging a Perth player down in the box.

The penalty may have been soft, but either way it was unnecessary by a leader of the club. To round out the half Mile Sterjovski made it 3-0 after another completely unnecessary penalty was conceded by the Victory, this time the perpetrator was Matthew Foschini, who lunged for a challenge with opponent Evan Berger heading away from goal and unlikely to get to the ball in any case.

The second half was a slightly better performance however having clawed their way back to 3-1 via a controversial Harry Kewell penalty , the away sides task was made ever more difficult when Danny Allsopp was sent to have an early shower. The Glory scored a fourth goal through Andrezinho to completely embarrass the hapless Victory.



The red card was the Victory's sixth for the season and this disciplinary issue is one that Jim Magilton will have to quickly address if the team is to make the finals. The 'gaffer' has stated that Allsopp will be punished internally as well as receive his one match ban, whether or not this curbs the Victory's at times appalling disciplinary behaviour we will have to wait and see. Magilton has also started addressing the issue of Melbourne's flimsy defence by signing Socceroo and former Sydney FC player, Mark Milligan. Milligan will be given a starting berth against his former club, while Carlos Hernandez is rated a good chance to return. For Sydney they will be without young star Terry Antonis, meaning Brett Emerton will more than likely move more central to be flanked by Karol Kisel and Dimi Petratos.

Last week, for the second time this season, the Sky Blues came from behind to defeat Gold Coast and give under fire manager Vitezslav Lavicka somewhat of a stay of execution. The performance was however far from convincing and large portions of the crowd let Lavicka know of their displeasure when star playmaker Nicky Carle was withdrawn from the game.

The first time these sides met this season the game disappointingly ended in a 0-0 draw after being billed as 'Kewell V Emerton' it turned out to be 'Reddy V Covic', as both keepers made a string of fine saves to keep a clean sheet. On this occasion it's hard to see the Victory play as badly as they did last week, but in a match that neither side can afford to lose I think this one might end all square.

Kiss of Death
Victory 1- 1 SFC

Sydney FC Line Up

1. Liam Reddy
2. Sebastian Ryall
3. Jamie Coyne
4. Pascal Bosschaart
5. Michael Beauchamp
7. Brett Emerton
8. Karol Kisel
9. Bruno Cazarine
10. Nick Carle
11. Dimi Petratos
12. Shannon Cole
15. Terry McFlynn (c)
17. Terry Antonis
18. Juho Makela
19. Mark Bridge
20. Ivan Necevski
21. Scott Jamieson
23. Rhyan Grant
three to be omitted

In: Scott Jamieson, Jamie Coyne, Juho Makela (all promoted)

Out: Nil
Unavailable: Mitch Mallia (knee – 1 week)

Gold Coast United v CC Mariners

Fri 27 Jan Skilled Park 8:00pm

Gold Coast Line Up

20.Jerrad Tyson [gk]
3.Michael Thwaite (c)
4.Zac Anderson
5.Kristian Rees
10.Tahj Minniecon
13.Ante Rozic
14.Ben Halloran
15.Adama Traore
16.Maceo Rigters
17.Chris Harold
18.James Brown
21.Daniel Severino
22.Peter Jungschlager
23.Dylan McGowan
24.Jonas Salley
28.Daniel Bowles
29.Mitch Bevan
40.Chris O'Connor [gk].
three to be omitted

In: 4.Zac Anderson, 10.Tahj Minniecon,17.Chris Harold, 23.Dylan McGowan, 28.Daniel Bowles (all promoted).

Out: 12.Dylan Macallister (hamstring – 6 weeks), 6.Paul Beekmans (personal leave – 2 weeks),
Unavailable: 1.Glen Moss (groin injury – 6 weeks), 9.Joel Porter (calf – 3 weeks), 19.Chris Broadfoot (ankle injury – indefinite)

By Adrian Deans

The last time these two sides met, it was first versus last but ended in a hard fought draw.

Miron Bleiberg's team were the first to arrive at Bluetongue with a plan to close down the Mariners' main attacking outlets and it worked a treat. Ben Halloran and James Brown pressed hard on Rose and Bojic in the Mariners' half and Maceo Rigters gave Patrick Zwaanswijk none of the time in which he usually revels. Consequently, the likes of Amini, McGlinchey and Ibini weren't getting the ball in the spaces they like and were comparatively ineffective.

Other teams took note and, while remaining unbeaten, the Mariners have found the going tougher in recent times. The departure of Matt Simon threw the whole team out of whack and, with all comers closing down their favourite transition channels, remaining unbeaten has been testament to other aspects of the Mariners' quality – guts and heart.

Adelaide had the Mariners pinned back until half time, but for some reason let them off the hook in the second, and by the way the Mariners came back, it's just possible that they've finally adjusted to the loss of Simon.

But going to Robina won't be easy. Despite the fact that the Gold Coast haven't been picking up points, they've been playing well and losing late due (probably) to inexperience. There's a hell of a lot of talent in this Gold Coast side and sooner or later they're going to realise how good they are. When that happens, it could get ugly – irrespective of the opposition.

Young Ben Halloran is a really exciting prospect. Fast, great touch, excellent vision and completely unselfish – I regard him as one of the new breed of potential Socceroos, but up against him are possibly the best two players – not only in the Mariners – but in the entire competition. Patrick Zwaanswijk continues to be the cornerstone of all that is good in the Mariners' back four and is one of their best creators going forward.

On top of that, Mat Simon seems to go to a new level every week. I've said, in numerous forums over the last 12 months, that Mitch Langerak will be the next long term Socceroos keeper when Mark Schwarzer finally hangs up his boots – but Mat Ryan is starting to make me doubt myself. He needs to be tested at a higher level, but for the moment, he's head and shoulders above the rest – and I'm not just talking about goalkeepers.

This will be a close game. Bleiberg knows how to blunt the Mariners going forward and he will be utterly desperate to stay in touch with the top six. He just might have something extra in store this time.

Adrian Deans is the author of Mr Cleansheets – published by Vulgar Press, distributed by Dennis Jones and Associates and available in all good book stores. Also available as ebook at www.mrcleansheets.com

Kiss of Death
Gold Coast 1-2 Mariners

Mariners Line Up

1. Mathew Ryan (Gk)
2. Daniel Mcbreen
3. Joshua Rose
4. Pedj Bojic
5. Brad Porter
6. Patrick Zwaanswijk
7. John Hutchinson
8. Rostyn Griffiths
9. Bernie Ibini
10. Adriano Pellegrino
11. Oliver Bozanic
12. Troy Hearfield
13. Stuart Musialik
14. Michael Mcglinchey
15. Brad Mcdonald
16. Trent Sainsbury
17. Tomas Rogic
18. Alex Wilkinson (C)
20. Justin Pasfield (Gk)
21. Sam Gallagher
22. Mustafa Amini
23. Adam Kwasnik
seven to be omitted

In: 5. Brad Porter, 10. Adriano Pellegrino, 13. Stuart Musialik, 15. Brad Mcdonald, 16. Trent Sainsbury, 17. Tomas Rogic, 21. Sam Gallagher (All Promoted)

Out: Nil
Unavailable: Nil

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Brisbane Roar v Newcastle Jets

Sat 28 Jan Suncorp Stadium 7:45pm

By Jarrod Ellis

A-League Champions Brisbane Roar will be hoping to continue their revival this Saturday when they host the lowly Newcastle Jets at Suncorp Stadium.

Despite a strong start to the season the Roar's hopes of repeat league titles are dwindling as they find themselves having slipped 11 points behind Central Coast on the ladder with nine games to play.

The Roar's five-loss interlude midway through the season, combined with the Mariners consistent accumulation of points, would have most ready to concede the top spot, even with nine games left in the season.

But the Roar haven't achieved what they have in the past two seasons by following popular consensus, and with a clash against Central Coast to follow their Saturday night battle with Newcastle Brisbane could very well be back in a title race before too long.

First though they will need to defeat a Newcastle side that currently sits ninth on the A-League ladder.

That task has been made more difficult with the announcement during the week that Besart Berisha was handed a one match ban for a breach of the National Code of Conduct in the aftermath of Brisbane's dramatic 2-1 win over Sydney FC at Suncorp Stadium on January 14.

The option for appeal has been turned down by the club and Berisha will sit in the stands as his teammates take to the pitch.

The absence of Berisha means the Roar will be absent their leading goalscorer but with the return to fitness of Thomas Broich and Henrique the home team aren't short of attacking talent.

Meanwhile Newcastle enters the match on a sorry run of results but were unlucky not to take the three points on offer against Adelaide on Wednesday night.

After Perth and Wellington have managed to pick up wins on the road in the last few rounds, the Jets must surely take the mantle of the worst travelling sides in the competition, managing a meagre two points away from home all season.

With a solid home record early on in the season Newcastle had sat as high as third, but even that has deteriorated over the past six weeks and they now sit second last, having won only once in their past seven.

Coach Gary van Egmond is faced with the awkward proposition of trying to re-program a squad he has inherited to play his style of football while at the same time trying to maintain winning results.

With the Jets managing only three wins in the 15 games van Egmond has been in charge, it's fair to say it hasn't worked out so far.

When they take to the pitch on Saturday it will be the third game in nine days for Newcastle and with their counterparts comparatively rested and in better form it should come as a major shock if the Jets can take anything more than a point home from Brisbane.

Kiss of Death
Roar 3-1 Jets

Roar Line Up

1. Michael Theoklitos (GK)
2. Matt Smith (C)
3. Shane Stefanutto
4. Matt Jurman
5. Ivan Franjic
6. Erik Paaratlu
7. Besart Berisha
8. Massimo Murdocca
9. Kofi Danning
10. Henrique
11. Issey Nakajima-Farran
14. Rocky Visconte
16. Mohamed Adnan
17. Mitch Nichols
18. Luke Brattan
19. Jack Hingert
20. Andrew Redmayne (GK)
22. Thomas Broich

three to be omitted

In: 19. Jack Hingert (promoted), 18. Luke Brattan (promoted), 9. Kofi Danning (promoted)

Out: Nil

Unavailable: Nil

Jets Line Up

1. Ben Kennedy (gk)
2. Taylor Regan
4. Nikolai Topor-Stanley
6. Ben Kantarovski
8. Jeremy Brockie
9. Michael Bridges
10. Ruben Zadkovich
11. Tarek Elrich
12. Jobe Wheelhouse (c)
13. Sung-Hwan Byun
14. Labinot Haliti
18. Marco Jesic
19. Matthew Nash
22. Ali Abbas
23. Ryan Griffiths
25. Jacob Pepper
26. Connor Chapman

two to be omitted

In: 26. Connor Chapman (promoted), 11. Tarek Elrich (returns from suspension), 12. Jobe Wheelhouse (returns from virus)

Out: 5. Tiago Calvano (suspended – 1 match)

Unavailable: Sam Gallaway (knee), 24.Francis Jeffers (ankle)

Wellington Phoenix v Melbourne Heart

Sun 29 Jan Westpac Stadium 2:30pm

By Joe Gallagher

Last weekend's flight from Australia to New Zealand must have been very foreign on three counts for Wellington Phoenix.

They had picked up their first three points across the ditch this season, their first back to back wins in Australia in the club's history, and right fullback Manny Muscat had scored his first A-League goal, after three-and-a-bit years and 84 games' worth of trying.

And such is the nature of the A-League that the two well deserved victories – both 1-0, on the Gold Coast and in Newcastle – sees the Phoenix sit third ahead of Sunday's visit of fourth-placed Melbourne Heart, with the very real possibility of moving into the lofty heights of second place looming.

The Heart, on the other hand, will be desperate for three points to move back towards the summit of the league ladder, winless so far in 2012 since their 4-0 thumping of Sydney FC in December.

The most recent disappointment for this weekend's visitors came in a 1-1 home draw with champions Brisbane Roar, after the Heart led for much of the match and dominated large patches. The match was the last of a home triple-header which yielded one point from a possible nine.

And though Wellington is usually a daunting destination for a side coming off the back of ____ games without a win, the Phoenix have looked uncharacteristically shaky at home in recent times and will do well to avoid any complacency after the most productive road trip in the club's four and a half year existence.

The home side are likely to be without last week's match-winner Muscat, who has returned to Australia for the birth of his child, but will add Vince Lia in a straight swap with the Maltese defender. All signs suggest that boss Ricki Herbert will, otherwise, name an unchanged line-up to that which spent a fortnight across the Tasman.

One of the features of Heart's disappointing home treble last week was their consistent rotation. John van't Schip's injury problems are relieved ever so slightly with the return of Wayne Srhoj, but the physio's office will still feature Fred, Kiliment Taseski and Nick Kalmar. For van't Schip, it is important that his current side start firing soon, as the trio are unlikely to return for up to another month.

Melbourne have taken a day off training this week to recover from what was ultimately a brusing schedule of three matches in six days – physically and emotionally.

But Heart fans can't be guaranteed that this weekend will bring much of an improvement. Wellington will again be inspired to recreate the formidability of their home turf after their most recent disappointment in Wellington against Perth, and are looking to take full advantage of their remaining four matches in New Zealand's capital.

They will also expect a large crowd after owner Gareth Morgan took to Twitter this week, warning that if the crowds don't gather soon, the club will take their games around the country.

Kiss of Death
Phoenix 2-1 Heart

Phoenix Line Up

1. Mark Paston (GK)
2. Manny Muscat
3. Tony Lochhead
6. Tim Brown
7. Leo Bertos
8. Paul Ifill
9. Chris Greenacre
11. Daniel
12. Nicky Ward
15. Cameron Lindsay
18. Ben Sigmund
19. Jimmy Downey
20, Tony Warner (GK)
21. Dani Sanchez
22. Andrew Durante (C)
24. Alex Smith

one to be omitted

In: Cameron Lindsay (promoted)

Out: Nil

Unavailable: Vince Lia (knee injury 1 to 2 weeks), Lucas Pantelis (knee injury - indefinite)

Heart Line Up

1. Clint Bolton
2. Michael Marrone
3. Brendan Hamill
4. Simon Colosimo
6. Matt Thompson
7. Rutger Worm
8. Kristian Sarkies
9. Maycon
11. Alex Terra
13. Jonatan Germano
15. David Williams
16. Aziz Behich
17. Jason Hoffman
18. Curtis Good
19. Eli Babalj
23. Mate Dugandzic
30. Sebastian Mattei *two to be omitted*

In: Eli Babalj (promoted), Simon Colosimo (returns from injury)

Out: Nil

Unavailable: Nick Kalmar (back – 4 weeks), Kliment Taseski (foot – 4 to 6 weeks), Fred (groin – 4 to 6 weeks), Wayne Srhoj (quad – 1 week)

Adelaide United v Perth Glory

Sun 29 Jan Hindmarsh Stadium 5pm

Adelaide Utd Line Up

1.Eugene Galekovic (gk) (c)
2.Osama Malik
3.Nigel Boogaard
5.Daniel Mullen
7.Zenon Caravella
9.Sergio van Dijk
10.Dario Vidosic
11.Bruce Djite
12.Antony Golec
14.Cameron Watson
15.Jacob Melling
16.Spase Dilevski
17.Iain Ramsay
18.Fabian Barbiero
20.Mark Birighitti (gk)
21.Francisco Usucar
one to be omitted

In: Spase Dilevski (returns from injury)

Out: Nil

Unavailable: Milan Susak (hamstring), Cassio (foot), Jon McKain (knee), Evgeniy Levchenko (groin)

By Nat Adamopoulos

Reds Face Rampant Glory

John Kosmina will have a task on his hands ensuring that the match between Perth Glory and his mighty Reds at Hindmarsh will end up being a Super Sunday for the homeside.

After Perth's new found confidence trouncing Melbourne Victory with their huge 4-1 win in their last match played, Kosmina's warriors need to gather all they have to do something of the same for their hometown fans. And their first test will be stopping their former striker Shane Smeltz from finding the back of the net for the Glory, touted as a 'class act' after his selfless act of generosity to forego a hat-trick and offer a spot kick to team mate Mile Sterjovski in the entertaining match against the Victory. But being a former student under Kosmina in the early days, the coach may have the upperhand in how to give the striker some challenges to face.

Despite succumbing to his first ever loss against the Central Coast Mariners, the Red's boss saw his side push the league leaders hard and to a point can count his side unlucky to not come away at least sharing the points. The way the Adelaide side have played and progressed over the weeks since he took over the reigns feeds Kosmina's hunger for improvement. Commenting about the Mariners match Kossie was philosophical about his players and their performances.

"That's what happens in football," he said. "You've got to play for 90 minutes. From a football perspective how can you complain. You're always going to get peaks and troughs where the other team gets on top. We dominated most of the first half and could have gone in 3- or 4-1 up. The football was fantastic. That's what you build on. But credit to the Mariners. They're battle-hardened, you can see that. That's probably what we lack a little bit, some older heads who have been in some tough games. But that's how you learn." I don't think shape was the problem, it was a lack of concentration and a lack of experience when it counted the most."

One old head they can always count on is their solid gold keeper and captain Eugene Galekovic, who has certainly stood out with another outstanding season of football so far. Sergio Van Dijk and Bruce Djite too have been on the improve of late, Van Dijk finding the back of the net regular since Kossie's second coming.

Lately Perth Glory too have seen a turnaround in their fortunes, with Coach Ian Ferguson crediting the belief the players have in themselves as a team as crucial to their best ever season performance in the victory over the Melbourne side.

"It's a credit to the boys that over the past five or six weeks we've put this run together ... I'm absolutely proud of every one of them," he said. Ferguson also credited the team bonding and getting the tactics right as key factors for the sides improvement. "We've bonded so well, we're a really tight unit and when we go into games now we're pretty confident. In the last six weeks, it's probably the first time in my time (at the club) that we've felt it. The hardest thing for me was finding the balance and the shape and the personnel and who fits in where. I think the balance is right now with the formation we're playing. If we reach the top six, I'd say we've achieved what we wanted to achieve, but there's still a long way to go."

Glory will be the more rested side having a week between battles where Adelaide's busy schedule see them playing 3 games in 8 days, so it will certainly be a case of sorting the men from the boys. Kosmina has little sympathy for his players despite the heavy workload in the coming days, suggesting the extra match against the Newcastle Jets in Bathurst midweek will help them get to a level they will need before their Asian Champions League campaign begins in March.

With a win, both sides can move up the ladder and start to put their names on a place in the top six, regardless it will be a match that no doubt will be a fight to the end for much needed points, Adelaide to take the honours

Kiss of Death
AUFC 2-1 Glory

Glory Line Up

1.Danny VUKOVIC (gk)
2. Josh MITCHELL
3.Bas van den BRINK
4.Billy MEHMET
5.Steve PANTELIDIS
7.Jacob BURNS (c)
8.Adam HUGHES
9.Shane SMELTZ
10.Liam MILLER
14.Steven McGARRY
15.Tommy AMPHLETT
16.Evan BERGER
17.Todd HOWARTH
18 Jesse MAKAROUNAS
19, Josh RISDON
21.Mile STERJOVSKI
22.Adam TAGGART
27.ANDREZINHO
30. Lewis ITALIANO (gk)
35. Dean HEFFERNAN
five to be omitted

In: 2. Josh MITCHELL (returns from injury), 4.Billy MEHMET (returns from injury) 15.Tommy AMPHLETT (promoted), 18 Jesse MAKAROUNAS (promoted), 35. Dean HEFFERNAN (promoted)
Out: Nil
Unavailable: 6.Chris COYNE (Achilles), 11.Victor SIKORA (hip – long term injury list), 12.Scott NEVILLE (knee), 13.Travis DODD (abdominal strain)

Reds and Jets finish all square in Bathurst

Adelaide United
1

Newcastle Jets
1

Match Details

Adelaide United FC 1 (van Dijk 57')
Newcastle Jets 1 (Wheelhouse 72')
Referee: Alan Milliner
@ Carrington Park, Bathurst

Adelaide United line-up: 1.Eugene Galekovic (gk) (c), 2.Osama Malik, 3.Nigel Boogaard, 5.Daniel Mullen, 9.Sergio van Dijk, 10.Dario Vidosic, 11.Bruce Djite, 12.Antony Golec, 14.Cameron Watson, 17.Iain Ramsay, 18.Fabian Barbiero

Yellow Cards: Barbiero 45', Malik 90', Boogaard 90+1', Galekovic 90+2', Mullen 90+3'
Red Cards: Nil

Newcastle Jets line-up: 1.Ben Kennedy (gk), 2.Taylor Regan, 4.Nikolai Topor-Stanley, 5.Tiago Calvano, 6.Ben Kantarovski, 8.Jeremy Brockie (9.Michael Bridges 73'), 10.Ruben Zadkovich, 11.Tarek Elrich (12. Jobe Wheelhouse 58'), 14.Labinot Haliti (21.Francis Jeffers 62'), 18.Marko Jesic, 23.Ryan Griffiths

Yellow Cards: Tiago 65'
Red Cards: Nil

By Nick Kerber

Newcastle's Marko Jesic leads the chase. Photo: FFA

Sergio van Dijk's sixth goal in five games was not enough for Adelaide United FC to get past the Newcastle Jets as the teams fought out a 1-1 draw in Bathurst.

Van Dijk put the Reds ahead with a clinical finish in the 57th minute but Jets substitute Jobe Wheelhouse came up with one of his own to draw Newcastle level.

On a more than satisfactory pitch surface, Carrington Park failed to prove the happiest hunting ground for both sides as they were forced to be content with sharing the spoils in game that was seen as a 'six pointer'. The Reds created enough chances to press their advantage home but again the back of the net eluded them.

Making his first start since November, Iain Ramsay was a livewire down the left hand side, his combination with left back Antony Golec proving a main avenue for many of the Reds' attacks throughout the 90 minutes.

Attacking Jets midfielder Labinot Haliti had the first sighter of the match after 12 minutes when he forced Eugene Galekovic to save low down to his right before Ramsay struck a first time volley over the bar less than a minute later at the other end.

Fabian Barbiero then had a quality opportunity after a build up involving van Dijk and Bruce Djite, but he also flashed his shot well over the target.

The Reds had six corners in the first half an hour but they could not make the most of could not make the them count as they tried to cut through the Newcastle defence.

Golec found van Dijk with some rare space in the penalty area, however the Dutchman's radar was not quite there as he directed his header straight at Jets keeper Ben Kennedy.

Then just before half time Galekovic saved Cameron Watson from blushing when the defender's back pass was easily picked off by Haliti, the Reds keeper producing a fine save to leave scores level at the break.

Osama Malik almost instigated the breakthrough when he released Djite down the right but his pass had a little too much on it, giving Kennedy a chance to come out and block the striker's effort.

Still searching for the game's opening goal, it came in the 57th minute when Ramsay did well to keep his feet as he neared the byline after dispossessing Ruben Zadkovich, giving himself time to pick out van Dijk lurking just outside the edge of the six yard box and the Dutchman rammed the ball past Kennedy.

However, 15 minutes later it was 1-1 when Zadkovich worked his way into the penalty area down the right before pinpointing the run of Wheelhouse, who was in just enough space to send the ball into the back of the net.

The equaliser seemed to invigorate the Jets and the Reds were forced to dig deep to ensure they did not go behind, Galekovic positioning himself perfectly to keep out a Michael Bridges free kick in injury time.

With youngsters Jacob Melling and Teeboy Kamara, along with holding midfielder Francisco Usucar on the bench, Reds coach John Kosmina chose not to utilise his subs as the pressure and desperation of the game intensified towards its finale.

Nigel Boogaard almost stole the win at the death from a Dario Vidosic corner, but his header just missed the target, the only thing the five minutes of injury time producing for the Reds being four yellow cards.

In assessing his team's performance and reflecting on the result, which lifts the Reds up one place on the table going into the Week 17 matches of the Hyundai A-League, Kosmina remained upbeat.

"I think we did enough to win the game tonight. We got into some great areas and probably didn't make enough of the territory or the possession," Kosmina said.

"I thought it (the character) was fantastic. Like I said before, I think we got forward into some great areas and some of the football we played was good. We stopped Newcastle playing, they got on top of us a little bit towards the end but you bring on a couple of subs who have actually played in the English Premier League (Jeffers and Bridges) and it makes a hell of a difference."

Kosmina also defended his decision not to use any of his three substitutions during a match that became tenser the longer it went.

"We had a couple of really young guys (Meling and Teeboy), and Pancho is a bit one dimensional in terms that I could flatten across the midfield whether we lose Dario for example, we lose our shape, so I look at a 15 year old and a 16 year old and to throw them in at that sort of stage was maybe asking a bit too much, and on the other side of it, we've got to tougher these guys that are on the field up a bit so they have to get through 90 minutes."

Robert **Di Fabio**

Mariners soar, all change at Victory

Central Coast en route to historic campaign:

The Gosford-based outfit has traditionally flown under the radar since the A-League's inception six and a half years ago, habitually playing second fiddle to its bigger foes in the vein of Sydney FC, Brisbane Roar and Melbourne Victory. However, this season the Central Coast is illustrating why it is a team to be reckoned with.

The A-League front-runners comfortably lead the competition by 11 points – with reining champions Brisbane Roar sitting in second position, confined to dreaming about the allure of back-to-back premiership plates – are rightly on course to secure its second premiership crown after topping the table in the 2007-08 A-League campaign, only to be denied at the final hurdle by local rival Newcastle Jets.

While the Mariners have exemplified a winning mentality in its A-League journey – participating in three Grand Finals, whilst accumulating the highest tally of points in the competition's history – it hasn't had the luxury of enforcing trepidation within its opposition, akin to Brisbane Roar, who made soundwaves around Australian football circles after going on an irrepressible 36-game unbeaten run.

Conversely, coach Graham Arnold, who only took to the helm at the beginning of the 2010-11 season, is moulding a team capable of achieving greatness. An enchanting style of football, accompanied with some of the brightest talent in the league – custodian Matthew Ryan, playmaker Mustafa Amini and Bernie Ibini are leading the way with awe-inspiring displays on the pitch – sees the Mariners currently on an impressive 15-game undefeated streak.

The competition's pacesetters haven't reached the lofty heights of Brisbane thus far, although the Mariners are certainly on the correct pathway to achieving a similar fate.

Personnel change required for Victory to realise potential:

With colossal expectations engulfed around Melbourne Victory, particularly with the acquisition of high-profile Socceroo star Harry Kewell, the blue half of Melbourne was expected to be one of the leading candidates for this season's A-League title, amid a squad portrayed as the best in the competition.

However, as many football enthusiasts will know all too well, predications don't always come into fruition. After an underwhelming start to the campaign, the Victory board pulled the pin on rookie coach Mehmet Durakovic, who failed to ignite the spark on his star-studded outfit, only recording four wins from the club's 15 outings.

His replacement, former Ipswich Town and QPR boss Jim Magilton, appointed for the remainder of the A-League season – in a probation type process to prove his coaching credentials to the Melbourne board – has an arduous assignment ahead.

While the objective of winning the league has been adjourned, a more realistic target of playing finals football is the new goal. Sitting merely outside the top-six, four points adrift of fierce rival Sydney FC – whom it plays on Australia Day – with a game in hand, the scenario doesn't appear overly daunting.

Jim Magilton will need to rely on the know-how of coaching assistants Steve Mautone and Kevin Muscat for the local football knowledge. Photo: TIM SIZE

After an encouraging commencement to Magilton's rein as Victory coach – sharing the spoils with a rejuvenated Adelaide United, unlucky not to prevail with the three points – his second match in charge was not so pretty. Whilst the Perth road trip is always a taxing affair, it's fair to say that no one expected a 4-1 pasting. Victory was thoroughly outplayed in all facets of the game. While the Glory played with gusto, skill and heart, it was Melbourne's tenuous display which raised the eyebrows of its ardent supporters, in conjunction with the football fraternity.

The absence of Costa Rican Carlos Hernandez – a prolific figure within the Victory squad, so often his performances alone have engineered the team to triumph – was a major loss, sidelined with a groin complaint. Although, it was the side's awful away form which again, was the impediment it couldn't overcome, with an inability to gel coherently on the pitch yet again.

Too much emphasis is being placed on talismanic striker Archie Thompson to save the team's blushes. When Ange Postecoglou took charge of Brisbane Roar during the 2009-10 season, he was widely criticised in some circles for his robust approach in cleaning out the old guard. Showing the likes of Craig Moore and Danny Tiatto the door may have seemed ludicrous at the time, on the contrary it proved to be the catalyst for the Roar's extraordinary success.

Many parallels can be drawn between Melbourne and Brisbane, and in Victory's instance, a clean-out may be the recipe for realising the club's soaring potential. The problem with Victory is, it has held on to players for far too long, becoming stagnated, while other clubs have strengthened and blossomed in different areas on the pitch.

After Sunday's paltry performance, Magilton made no secret about his desire to bring in fresh blood, and if possible dip into the club's coffers during the January transfer window.

"I was shocked," Magilton admitted. "We've learned painful lessons today. This is a man's game and unfortunately for us today, the men won.

"We've got into a bit of a rut and the sooner we can change personnel, the better. I think we need new faces.

"To change the mentality within the football club you need to change the mentality within the four rooms of the dressing room, the most important place in the club."

"A new manager wants to bring new players in. There are a group of players there who have underachieved this year."

While Victory's defence has often been its achilles heel, its stocks have received a boost with Mark Milligan signing a short-term deal with the club, on loan until the end of the season. Recently plying his trade for JEF United in the Japan, the 26-year-old should add much needed stability, in a backline with has been devoid of consistency, leaking 27 goals in only 17 games.

The club's roster still has its flaws, with considerable depth warranted in key positions – full-backs and central midfield comes to mind – however, it encompasses the group to still prosper, and with the right approach, is capable of achieving success with ten matches before the finals series.

Follow Robert on Twitter @RobertDiFabio

Compiled By Alvaro Rodriguez

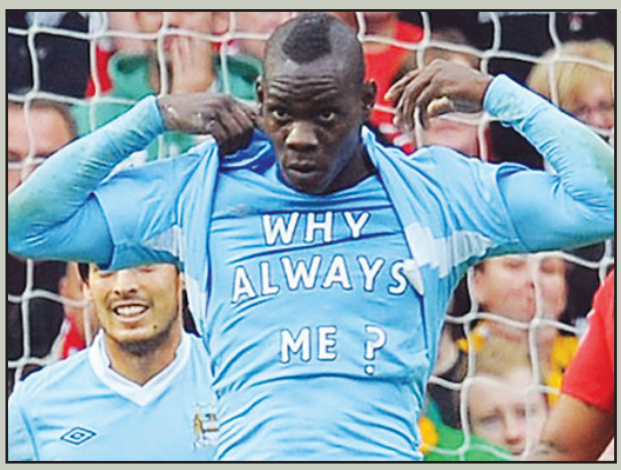
WHAT'S HOT

Hot on the heels of Melbourne Victory's 4-1 away capitulation to Perth Glory comes news of ex-Sydney FC defender Mark Milligan's loan return to the A-League with the Victory, from J-League 2 (Japanese second division) side JEF United. Coupled with the arrival of highly-rated youngster and one-time Bayern Munich youth player Julius Davies, things may well begin to look up for Victory thanks to the transfer market. And with the surplus-to-requirements Ricardinho reportedly on the verge of being released by the club, it does open up a valuable foreign-player spot. However I would urge Jim to take a chance on Victory's promising youth players like Paulo Retre and Jimmy Jeggo before making knee-jerk foreign signings for the sake of it, inasmuch as I do applaud him for lambasting his side's shambolic performance against the Glory. Although the hairdryer treatment is no magic solution, it would at least ram home to the players the severity of their predicament - and by association, that of the fans' too.

WHAT'S NOT

Another EPL round, another entry in the annals of Man City's Italian striker Mario Balotelli's penchant for madness. 'Super Mario' is in hot water again thanks to stomping on the hand of Tottenham's Scott Parker during their clash at City's Etihad ground, and been slapped with a four-match ban for his trouble, which should see him miss City's League Cup semi-final second leg. That's not what's meant by taking one for the team, mate! But then this is a guy who, not long after arriving in England was out cruising in his sportscar one day when, having been pulled up by the Old Bill and asked why he was hooning around in a gas-guzzler with around 5 grand's worth of banknotes lying on the passenger seat, replied smugly, "Because I'm Rich!" God luv ya mate.

For some strange reason the new coach's hairdryer treatment seemed to actually do the trick...



You've got one guess....

SEPARATED AT BIRTH

Diego Militto rolls with the punches for Argentina and Inter Milan, while Italian Stallion Sylvester Stallone was unbetable in 'Escape to Victory'.

Seen any uncanny doppelgangers lately? Let us know on our facebook page and you could win a prize.

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goal! Weekly

'Old heads' give Jim thumbs up

By Daniel Quinn

From Belfast, Northern Island via Shamrock Rovers comes Jim Magilton to arguably the A-League's biggest side – Melbourne Victory.

Can the new gaffer with an immense playing career but a modest coaching one bring success to the A-League's powerhouse of football? We may have to wait until the end of the season when Magilton's interim head coaching period comes to an end before passing judgement. But when Magilton was appointed after Mehmet Durakovic was sacked the Victory supporters had just one question on their mind – who is Jim Magilton?

Born in Belfast, Northern Ireland, the 42-year-old brings a vast playing experience to Melbourne. As a player Magilton started his career at English giants Liverpool when he left his family in Belfast at the age of 15. Magilton, however, did not make one senior appearance but was the captain of Liverpool's reserve side before moving onto Oxford United making 150 appearances over a four-year spell.

A three-year spell was next at Southampton where he spent time with former Socceroo Robbie Slater and made 130 appearances. But once Dave Jones was appointed as boss Magilton moved onto Sheffield Wednesday but could only make 27 appearances over two seasons before joining Ipswich Town initially on loan before making the move permanent in 1999.

Magilton, a central midfielder in his playing career, played his last seven seasons at Ipswich making over 250 appearances before retiring.

Magilton also played for the Northern Irish national team between 1991 and 2002 making 52 appearances and scoring five goals and also captained the side.

Magilton is still regarded as a legend but not just for his playing career but also for his three-year spell as manager.

After Magilton retired from playing he took over as manager after Joe Royle left Portman Road. Magilton managed Ipswich to 148 games over two-and-a-half seasons with a win ratio of 37.8%.

In June 2009, Magilton joined Queens Park Rangers (QPR) as manager. The club was then in the English Championship but he only lasted six months until December with a win ration of 37.5% over 24 games. His exit came by mutual consent after a reported heated exchange with Hungarian Akos Buzsaky. Magilton was subsequently suspended and later left Loftus Road.

New Melbourne Victory coach Jim Magilton has no time to waste in adjusting to the A-League. Photo: TIM SIZE

Magilton took a break from managing after his stint at QPR stating that he needed a break after being involved in football non-stop since he was 15 and to mourn his mother's death. During his absence from the game Magilton also set up The Magilton Foundation which aims to help disadvantaged youths in building their skills to make a living.

In July 2011 Magilton became an assistant to then close friend Michael O'Neill at Shamrock Rovers in the League of Ireland. This new appointment included helping Shamrock to the Europa League group stages where the Irish champions took on English Premier League side Tottenham. In December 2011 both Magilton and O'Neill applied for the national job of Northern Ireland. The Irish Football Association (IFA) decided to go with the more successful O'Neill to manage the Northern Irish national team.

Initially Magilton was interviewed and was second choice behind Durakovic when the former Socceroo was appointed to the Victory head coaching role last year. But after missing out on the Northern Irish job and after Durakovic was axed, Magilton was appointed Melbourne Victory interim coach until the end of the current A-League season.

Magilton was delighted to get back into management and to receive an offer not long after missing out on the Northern Irish gig.

"It all happened pretty quickly," Magilton said after his appointment.

"I got a phone call, the opportunity arose and I snapped it up."

The new gaffer described himself to the fans and to the media. "I am fearless, I am meticulous, I am astute, I am very much hands-on and I like to get amongst the players and be involved in the training aspect of the setup," he said.

The Northern Irishman wants to please the supporters with an attractive brand of football.

"I want to give them confidence to play and that's not going to happen overnight. It's going to take a little bit of time, it's a day by day, week by week thing and it's constantly working with them and encouraging them to do what I want them to do.

"I've always been regarded as playing an attractive brand of passing football. In saying that we'll look at the playing staff." Magilton also is considering bringing in some new faces to the Victory squad, players that he has worked with before.

Magilton back in his playing days for Northern Ireland.

"I have one or two that I think we can bring in, but I want to give these lads a chance. It would be unfair to make wholesale changes," he said.

"They're all involved with other clubs, and players I've either had playing time with, or have managed."

Magilton though has warned fans that it will take time for Victory to play the way he wants them to.

"I want to give them confidence to play and that's not going to happen overnight. It's going to take a little bit of time, it's a day by day, week by week thing and it's constantly working with them and encouraging them to do what I want them to do.

"Rome wasn't built in a day and they've had four or five days with me," he said prior to his first match.

After a few training sessions with the squad Magilton let the media know of the feelings inside the squad.

"They are lively, and you'd like to think that's the first thing that happens when the new management comes in," he said.

"Training has been sharp, there has been a great tempo to it and they have all been very responsive."

Players who had not been getting a chance under Durakovic will get a chance to impress the new gaffer.

"I've seen every team sheet, watched the vast majority of the games, these lads who have been out they need a lift and they'll be asking all sorts of questions about will he like me or not.

Marco Rojas, (Isaka) Cernak, Solorzano, Jimmy Jeggo, (Luke) O'Dea, good player. It's getting a feel and giving them my confidence and encouragement and as it goes along you've got to make decisions on people and then you've got to get the right type in to move the club forward if I'm still here."

Victory midfielder Grant Brebner described how the early training sessions were run.

"In the early stages of the way Magilton wants to coach – it's certainly all about passing, getting the ball down."

Magilton took on John Kosmina's Adelaide United in his first game and the fierce encounter finished in a 1–1 draw after Archie Thompson scored early but Sergio van Dijk for the Reds equalised on 53 minutes.

After his first game in charge he was pleased with his side's performance despite the result. "I think we were dominant in the first-half, I think if we took our chances we probably would have won the game comfortably but credit to them to come back at us and cause a few problems second-half. But all in all I am pleased with our overall performance."

Archie Thompson too praised his new manager after Magilton's first game.

"I think Jim is a great manager. He's had the experience of coaching some big clubs in the championship, QPR and Ipswich Town. He's just a good manager, the way he speaks to players."

"He just looks like someone who can look at a player and say 'I need to talk to this player this way' or 'I need to manage that player that way.' It's not about how much you know about the game, it's about how you manage the players. I think he's really good like that."

Harry Kewell considers Melbourne Victory to have a lot of hunger and drive in them since Magilton has taken over.

"I don't know (what it is but) there's something in the team. "You get this kind of feeling of hunger coming over the last week.

"As a footballer you can smell kind of things and I can smell something in this team that wants to do something great."

With the backing of experienced campaigners such as Kewell, Brebner and Thompson, Magilton may prove to be an astute appointment and may end up with a long-term contract. Only time will tell.

The same can be said of his chances of winning over the Melbourne Victory fans with their high expectations of success.

Quotes first appeared in David Davutovic's exclusive interview in last week's Herald-Sun.

ADRIAN LEIJER

Melbourne Victory

PHOTOS/GRAPHICS: ANITA MILAS

Mariners command pole position in NYL

Team-mates Alistair Quinn (left), Nick Fitzgerald and Kofi Danning (right) share the joy with Tom Cirjak (10) who came on as a sub and scored Roar's fifth goal against Heart
Photo: JOHN PUNSHON

High speed action from Kofi Danning (Roar) and Craig Goodwin (Heart).
Photo: JOHN PUNSHON

By Daniel Quinn

Goalless as Velaphi saves penalty

Former Perth Glory goalkeeper Tando Velaphi has saved a penalty for Melbourne Victory in their nil-all draw with Perth at 6PR Stadium on Sunday.

It was Victory who created the earlier chances, first with Jimmy Jeggo shooting wide after a Luke O'Dea cutback.

Nick Ansell came close next when he headed across goal only for Sam Mitchinson to clear off the line.

Just before half-time Glory should have taken the lead. Adam Nakic brought down Ndumba Makeche in the box and a penalty was awarded. But Velaphi did well to save Brandon O'Neill's penalty.

On 52 minutes Victory came agonisingly close when Kwabena Boahene's cross had too much on it for Hernan Espindola.

Makeche then was played through onto goal but after he was pushed out wide Velaphi made a great save to deny the forward.

Luc Jeggo then thought he scored a stoppage-time winner but the referee ruled it out for off-side.

Not long later Storm Roux's bad tackle resulted in Roux being sent off with a straight red card.

Melbourne Victory coach Darren Davies believed his side deserved all three points. "Yeah I think overall in the game possibly, we probably deserved all three points and credit to the boys, Perth were a very good side. Gareth Naven has them playing some good stuff and they are top of the league and obviously that shows how far we've come as a group. We would have taken a point on the plane over but disappointed with a point on the way back."

Roar dominate at the depth

Brisbane Roar has finished off well to defeat Melbourne Heart 5-1 at John Cain Memorial Park on Sunday afternoon.

On 7 minutes Nicholas Fitzgerald opened the scoring with a powerful shot along the ground which beet Sebastian Mattei.

Brisbane extended their lead thanks to a great turn and finish by Matthew Thurtell.

On 63 minutes Heart grabbed a goal back thanks to Craig Goodwin. The young full-back ran into the box before beating Redmayne at the near post.

Brisbane was looking to get back their two goal margin with Thurtell who ran into the box but Mattei got down quickly to save.

Two minutes later George Lambadaridis made it 3-1 with a left foot finish after a Chris Bush cut back to put the game behind the hosts.

Only moments later Thurtell made it 4-1 with a comfortable finish past Mattei.

In stoppage time Brisbane showed their late dominance and made it 5-1 with a brilliant long range strike by Tomislav Cirjak.

Talevski scores late to take all three points

An 82nd minute strike by David Talevski has defeated the AIS 1-0 at Ausgrid Stadium on Friday night.

Newcastle Jets created their first chance on 22 minutes when Andrew Hoole ran through the centre before shooting from the edge of the box that hit the upright.

Early in the second-half Virgili hit the crossbar from the right wing before AIS 'keeper Jordan Thurtell made two saves. First he parried Abe Wheelhouse's effort then he denied Fajkovic's follow-up strike.

On 75 minutes Kyle Bradbery thought he opened the scoring after poking Talevski's cross home but Bradbery was offside.

Eight minutes before the end Jets did open the scoring. Virgili played a great ball for Talevski who chipped Thurtell in goal.

Virgili should have extended the lead from an acute angle but shot wide before Thurtell denied Bradbery.

In stoppage time Jack Green could have snatched a late equaliser but his header went wide.

Comfortable win by Central Coast

Central Coast Mariners have comfortably beaten Adelaide United 3-0 at Pluim Park on Friday thanks to goals from Sam Gallagher, Kwabena Appiah-Kubi and Anthony Caceres.

On 32 minutes Central Coast took the lead after Pellegrino's corner was thumped in by Gallagher past Izzo.

Only ten minutes later the Mariners extended their lead. Appiah-Kubi showed his fast pace to reach the ball before Izzo and then finishing over the goal line.

Just eight minutes into the second-half it was 3-0 thanks to Caceres. The midfielder made a great run before controlling and finishing past Izzo.

15-year-old Teeboy Kamara then stun Pasfield's gloves before Brad McDonald shot just wide of the woodwork seconds later.

Liam Wooding was sent off late on too for the Baby Reds.

Mitch Cooper brace sinks Sydney

A Mitch Cooper brace has defeated Sydney FC 3-1 at WIN Jubilee Oval at Kogarah on Saturday.

Sydney forward Joe Gibbs should have scored for the hosts with their first chance but couldn't score.

Sydney goalkeeper Ryan Norval first denied Tahj Minniecon and Sammi Tesfagabr with two great saves.

Gold Coast opened the scoring on just 15 minutes with Mitch Cooper with his first of the game.

Gold Coast 'keeper was never really tested but only 32 minutes he did dive well to save from Christopher Naumoff.

Minniecon then doubled the lead on 52 minutes as he tucked away a loose ball.

On 66 minutes Nathan Sherlock rose high to grab one back for the hosts after a great corner from Mitchell Mallia.

But on 77 minutes Cooper scored his second of the day when he ran onto a long ball and finished well.

Results

Newcastle Jets 1-0 AIS
CC Mariners 3-0 Adelaide United
Sydney FC 1-3 Gold Coast United
Perth Glory FC 0-0 Melbourne Victory
Melbourne Heart FC 1-5 Brisbane Roar

NYL Standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	D	P
1 CC Mariners	13	8	1	4	29	13	16	25
2 Perth Glory	12	7	4	1	28	20	8	25
5 Brisbane Roar	12	6	3	3	32	25	7	21
3 Sydney FC	12	6	2	4	32	21	11	20
6 Gold Coast United	12	6	1	5	25	21	4	19
4 Melbourne Heart	13	6	0	7	24	30	-6	18
6 Newcastle Jets	12	5	2	5	22	21	1	17
7 AIS	12	4	1	7	22	30	-8	13
9 Adelaide United	12	3	3	6	13	24	-11	12
10 Melbourne Victory	12	1	1	10	9	30	-21	4

Next Round

Sat 28 Jan 12 3:00pm
AIS Vs Central Coast Mariners
Athletics Track, Canberra

Sat 28 Jan 12 4:00pm
Melbourne Heart Vs Gold Coast United
John Cain Memorial Park, Thornbury

Sat 28 Jan 12 5:00pm
Perth Glory FC Vs Adelaide United
6PR Stadium, Inglewood

Sun 29 Jan 12 4:00pm
Melbourne Victory FC Vs Sydney FC
Kingston Heath, Cheltenham

Sun 29 Jan 12 4:00pm
Brisbane Roar FC Vs Newcastle Jets
Cleveland Showgrounds, Cleveland

It's a Canberra United v Roar Grand Final!

By FFA

A drama-charged weekend of Westfield W-League action has set up a mouth-watering grand final between Canberra United and Brisbane Roar next Saturday.

Unbeaten premiers Canberra will host the decider at their McKellar Park fortress after finally subduing a resolute Melbourne Victory with the league's leading goalscorer Michelle Heyman predictably proving the difference on the scoresheet.

Sydney FC seemed certain for a trip to Canberra only for Brisbane to equalise deep into injury time, before prevailing on penalties in a typically intense contest between the league's two traditional heavyweights.

Brisbane's win sets up a repeat of the season one finale when the Roar were 2-0 victors, only this time the hosts have been reversed.

The victory means Brisbane have qualified for each of the competition's four grand finals, while Sydney miss out on the decider for the first time in three seasons.

The Sky Blues were looking good to overturn last weekend's 1-0 final round defeat against the Roar with midfielder Renee Rollason scoring in the first half.

Despite chances galore at both ends, and in part due to some inspired goalkeeping for the Roar's Casey Dumont and Sydney FC's Allison Lipsher, scores remain unchanged until a late intervention from a familiar source.

Super sub Emily Gielnik scored the most important of numerous strikes this campaign having started the afternoon on the bench. This time though there was just seconds left on the clock, and Sydney's afternoon went from bad to worse in the blink of an eye with star forward Kyah Simon dismissed after receiving a second caution.

Extra time was unable to separate the teams but the Roar triumphed 4-2 on penalties to repeat their spot-kick success in last season's semi-final against Canberra.

Sydney's Teresa Polias and Estelle Johnson failed with their attempts as did Olga Cebrian-Garcia for the home side, allowing Aivi Luik the honour of slotting home the winning penalty.

A day earlier a record Belconnen crowd of 1,785 witnessed a thrilling tussle in which the visiting Melbourne Victory took it to their highly rated opponents who were made to work overtime before wresting control.

The Victory showed no signs of last season's debut finals nerves and could have easily gone into half-time at least a goal to the good with Jodie Taylor pushing a number of chances wide.

At the other end, lively teenager Hayley Raso brushed an effort against the post with the home side re-energised after the break.

Heyman was a persistent menace to the Victory defence and duly got her reward seven minutes from full time just as extra time loomed. Heyman bagged her 13th of the season with a long-range strike which somewhat fortuitously ricocheted over unlucky Victory goalkeeper Brianna Davey.

Canberra Utd book a place in the GF thanks Michelle Heyman's winner. Photo: ANN ODONG

Semi final action between Victory and Canberra Utd.
Photo: ANN ODONG

Brisbane Roar triumph over SFC after a penalty shoot-out.
Photo: ANN ODONG

Standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	D	P
1 Canberra United	10	7	3	0	23	9	14	24
2 Brisbane Roar	10	6	3	1	20	11	9	21
3 Sydney FC	10	5	2	3	26	8	18	17
4 Melbourne Victory	10	5	2	3	21	9	12	17
5 Newcastle Jets	10	4	0	6	18	22	-4	12
6 Perth Glory	10	2	0	8	11	36	-25	6
7 Adelaide United	10	1	0	9	6	30	-24	3

Grand Final

Canberra United
v
Brisbane Roar
Saturday 28 January 2012
McKellar Stadium - Canberra
Kick Off: 3:00pm (EDST)
Gates Open: 2:00pm (EDST)

The match will be shown live on ABC at 3pm.

Semi Final Results

Canberra United 1 (Michelle Heyman 83')
Melbourne Victory 0

Brisbane Roar 1 (Emily Gielnik 95'+)
Sydney FC 1 (Renee Rollason 18')
** Brisbane Roar win 4-2 on penalties*

A tale or two about Chris

MACKENZIE AT LARGE

With Craig MacKenzie

CHRIS Taylor and Dandenong Thunder have a lot in common – they've never won a Victorian Premier League Grand Final.

But the man from Leicester has a chance to get that monkey off their backs in 2012 despite a shambolic few days at the helm of Thunder last season.

Taylor took over for one game (a 6–0 thumping by Northcote) then did the club a financial favour and walked, knowing the impost some heavy FFV misconduct penalties had placed on the Albanian-backed outfit's coffers.

"I turned up on the Monday (after the loss) to address the problems we had and there were seven players at training and two injured players," he said.

"I told the club that it was in everyone's interests to get someone else in but if they wanted to talk to me at the end of the season about the following year then they were welcome to do so. To their credit they contacted me and here we are."

While his return to the club a couple of months ago raised a few eyebrows there is a significant difference between the Thunder that Taylor joined briefly last season and the one he guides today – along with his hand-picked support staff he has had time during preseason to start putting his stamp on this current version.

His assistant is Gus Caminos who guided South Melbourne's under-21s to back-to-back titles last season, Julien Costain is handling the conditioning side of things and Lou Kastner doubles as Thunder under-21s coach and club goalkeeping coach.

"In the VPL a coach is like a CEO of a company. You've got to deal with different departments – the money man or the main sponsors, the committee, the supporters, the players. You have to manage as well as coach."

For Taylor, season 2012 represents a welcome return to club football after he left Melbourne Knights at the end of the 2009 season and applied unsuccessfully for an assistant coaching role with Melbourne Heart, who appointed Ante Milicic instead.

It's been a period of football respite that has changed him, recharged him and inspired him. On a personal level he has married for the second time and he and partner Michelle have a two-and-a-half year old son, Ryder.

"The last two years have really rejuvenated me. And they have put things into perspective," said Taylor.

"I've been doing my AFC A licence and I'm now starting to think a lot more about the philosophies of coaching.

"When I first came here (1981) I was really a cricketer. Football was my second sport. At national league level I initially played under Tommy Traynor (Sunshine George Cross) then John Gardiner and that's when I started to think about what coaching was about, how you had people in charge that could mould a team.

"It was John who pushed a lot of us to do coaching courses and his influence in the game here has been immense. There are a lot of people out there who got into coaching thanks to John."

But if not for youthful naivety and stereotyping, Taylor may never have landed on Victorian soil.

Taylor could have gone to Townsville or Sunshine City. He chose the latter as the club's name conjured up images of palm tree-lined boulevards and golden beaches but when he arrived at Chaplin Reserve in Melbourne's western suburbs reality quickly set in.

Nevertheless, Taylor went on to make the most of the amalgamation between Sunshine City and George Cross with over 100 national soccer league appearances for Georgies, a feat that has earned him the status of a modern-day club legend.

He was dumped for the 1989/90 NSL season by incoming coach Ernie Merrick but his playing career effectively ended the following season due to a debilitating hip injury. He was 30 years old.

His coaching CV lists Thomastown (as assistant to Ken Murphy), Sunbury, Altona Magic, Melbourne Raiders, Green Gully, Altona East Phoenix, Sunshine George Cross, Melbourne Knights and Thunder. It also includes Victorian state coach and VPL Coach of the Year honours as well as coaching Victorian state junior sides. And somehow he also finds time to complete his duties as head zone coach for the Southern Blue Tongues in the Victorian Champions' League.

Here's a selection of Taylor quotes regarding some of the clubs on his CV.

"The two years I had at Sunbury were the most pleasurable years I've had in coaching. There was a great social atmosphere there.

"At Green Gully there's a constant challenge to win the league.

"Altona East was probably the best club I've been at in terms of togetherness and team bonding. I just felt that the club got a bit complacent. They thought that they didn't need new players to stay in the league while I thought they needed new players.

"At the end of my time with George Cross I felt there was too much interference. It was great at the start when you walked in the place and people were almost in awe of you but as people became more familiar with you they started to tell you how to do your job. In the end the guy in the canteen wants to tell you how to pick the team and it's just not on.

But if not for youthful naivety and stereotyping, Taylor may never have landed on Victorian soil.

Taylor could have gone to Townsville or Sunshine City. He chose the latter as the club's name conjured up images of palm tree-lined boulevards and golden beaches but when he arrived at Chaplin Reserve in Melbourne's western suburbs reality quickly set in.

"I really enjoyed my time at the Knights. They are a fantastic club."

Taylor reckons that two years as a coach with the one club in the VPL is about par for the course and if you have three straight years in charge you've done well.

"It's something to do with Australian culture. It's as if people think they need to keep changing things."

But he doesn't just keep a close eye on VPL matters and the recent upheaval at Melbourne Victory draws some interesting comments from him.

Dandenong Thunder coach Chris Taylor and his prized recruit, son Ryder.

"You've got the most stable club in the league and Ernie Merrick is the most successful coach in the league – why would you want to change that?

"All their decisions under the current administration seem to be knee-jerk reactions. They changed the club dramatically. They appointed Awaritefe and Durakovic then got rid of them within six months.

"If these decisions were so bad then why didn't the board resign for making these apparently monumental errors?

"It seems to me that board decisions in recent times have only served to destabilise the club."

On the playing front at Thunder, Taylor hasn't wasted much time in revamping the first team squad. Many of last year's players have gone, among them Ben Harrison and Archie Tomic who have joined Hume City. Steve Gray has signed with Oakleigh.

The newcomers include defender Bryan Bran, ex-Melbourne Knights and Oakleigh; Adam Casey, a former AIS, Sydney FC and North Queensland Fury forward or attacking midfielder who played with Dandaloo in the Illawarra Premier League last year; Sean McIlroy and Hamlet Armenian from Heidelberg; Domenic D'Angelo from Springvale White Eagles; and former VIS and Melbourne Victory youth team defender Andrew Mullett.

Expect more signings in coming weeks, from both local and overseas markets.

Bingham quits FFV

HARRY Bingham and Football Federation Victoria have parted company after a nine-year association.

The Asian Football Confederation, Oceania Football Confederation and Football Federation Australia coaching instructor resigned after it became clear that his contract would not be renewed. He'll finish up on Tuesday 7 February.

Bingham has worked for FFV as a country coaching coordinator, head of coaching education and more recently as head coach of a National Training Centre squad.

His NTC performance was recently reviewed by FFV employees Tim Frampton (General Manager – Football), Les Bee (Talented Player Development Manager), Sean Douglas (Technical Director) and FFA employees Han Berger (Technical Director) and John Boultbee (Head of National/International Football Development) who both participated via a phone link from Sydney.

Bingham follows in the footsteps of Ian Greener who was unceremoniously dumped by FFV at FFA's behest in 2010.

But given the success of Bingham's Victorian NTC squad at the 2011 Institute Challenge in Canberra last month you can be excused for scratching your head in disbelief.

More so when you consider that Bingham has previously lauded Berger's professional conduct and from all outward appearances seemed to have a sound working relationship with the FFA coaching powerbroker.

At the Institute Challenge three points were awarded for a win and one point for a draw while bonus points were given for teams that played most in line with FFA's Dutch-inspired national curriculum.

Victoria finished second in the tournament on both criteria. Not really surprising given that Bingham's boys were disciplined and organised and he has long been a supporter of the national curriculum.

Five Victorian youngsters were identified as potential Australian Institute of Sport scholarship holders while the tournament's top goalscorer was from Bingham's squad as was the tournament's top goalkeeper.

These are key performance indicators that should have served as ringing endorsements of Bingham's position and triggered a contract renewal.

I have no problem declaring my hand and saying that I am a Bingham supporter and from my perspective this whole affair reeks of both ageism (he's 53) and lingering anti-British sentiment that will never be supported in this column.

Coaching at these levels should never be about ethnic origins and coaching stereotypes. Rather it should be all about the ability to adopt a playing philosophy and to put that philosophy into practice. And Bingham ticks both these boxes.

FFV started advertising for a replacement for Bingham this week.

Harry Bingham and FFV have gone their different ways.

Couch Potato

* ALL TIMES ARE AEDT

SBS

SBS ONE
Sunday January 29th
10:30 AM FIFA World Cup 2014 Magazine

11:00 AM Les Murray's Football Feature

12:00 PM FIFA Futbol Mundial

Monday January 30th
04:30 PM FIFA Futbol Mundial
11:05 PM The World Game

SBS TWO
Monday January 29th
09:30 PM The World Game

SETANTA SPORTS

Thursday 26-Jan
Blue Sqaure Premier Round 30 Luton v Mansfield 6:00am LIVE
Copa Libertadores 1st Stage Internacional v Once Caldas 10:55am LIVE

Saturday 28-Jan
FA Cup Round 4 Watford v Tottenham 6:40am LIVE
Bundesliga Round 19 Hannover v Nuremburg 9:00am 1st Airing
Eredivisie Round 19 PSV v Vitesse 11:15am 1st Airing
FA Cup Round 4 Liverpool v Man Utd 11:15pm LIVE

Sunday 29-Jan
FA Cup Round 4 Teams TBC 1:45am LIVE
FA Cup Round 4 Brighton v Newcastle 4:00am LIVE
Ligue 1 Round 21 Lille v St Etienne 6:55am LIVE
FA Cup Round 4 QPR v Chelsea 9:00am 1st Airing
FA Cup Round 4 Teams TBC 10:45am 1st Airing
Bundesliga Round 19 Cologne v Schalke 12:30pm 1st Airing
Eredivisie Round 19 Feyenoord v Ajax 10:25pm LIVE

Monday 30-Jan
FA Cup Round 4 Sunderland v Middlesbrough 12:25am LIVE
FA Cup Round 4 Arsenal v Aston Villa 2:55am LIVE
Bundesliga Round 19 Mainz v Freiburg 5:15am 1st Airing
Ligue 1 Round 21 Rennes v Marseille 6:55am LIVE
Scottish League Cup Semi-Final Falkirk v Celtic 9:00am 1st Airing
Bundesliga Round 19 Stuttgart v Monchengladbach 1:15pm 1st Airing
Eredivisie Round 19 Roda v AZ 3:00pm 1st Airing

Tuesday 31-Jan
Ligue 1 Round 21 Brest v PSG 12:00am 1st Airing
Ligue 1 Round 21 Valenciennes v Ajaccio 3:30am 1st Airing

Thursday 2-Feb
Copa Libertadores 1st Stage 2nd Leg Flamengo v Real Potosi 10:55am LIVE
SPL Round 25 Motherwell v St Johnstone 1:45pm 1st Airing

one

Saturday 28th January
03:00 am Liverpool TV Liverpool V Bolton

Sunday 29th January
02:00 am Bundesliga Weekly Highlights Matchday 18
03:00 am Serie A (Rpt) Matchday 19: Inter Milan V Lazio
05:00 am The Serie A Highlights Show PG Matchday 19
06:00 am Bundesliga Weekly Highlights

Monday 30th January
12:45 am Bundesliga Weekly Highlights
01:45 am Serie A Matchday 19: Udinese V Catania
03:45 am FA Cup Classics G Middlesbrough V Chesterfield Semi Final 96/97
04:15 am Magic Of The FA Cup Chelsea's Greatest Games

Wednesday 01st February
02:30 am Liverpool TV Fa Cup 4th Round
06:00 am Serie A Matchday 20: Udinese V Juventus

Thursday 02nd February
02:30 am Bundesliga Matchday 19: Bayern Munich V Wolfburg
04:30 am Bundesliga Weekly Highlights
06:00 am Serie A Matchday 20: Lazio V Chievo
08:00 am The Serie A Highlights Show Matchday 20

FOX SPORTS

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE LIVE
Times listed are 7 minutes prior to kick-offs.

No matches scheduled January 28-31 due to FA Cup Round 4 fixtures.

Week 24
Wed Feb 1 Tottenham v Wigan 6.38 am Fox 3
Wed Feb 1 Wolves v Liverpool 6.38 am Viewers Choice
Wed Feb 1 Swansea v Chelsea 6.38 am Viewers Choice
Wed Feb 1 Man Utd v Stoke 6.53 am Fox 1
Wed Feb 1 Everton v Man City 6.53 am Fox 2
Thu Feb 2 Aston Villa v QPR 6.38 am Fox 2
Thu Feb 2 Sunderland v Norwich 6.53 am Viewers Choice
Thu Feb 2 Blackburn v Newcastle6.53 am Fox 3
Thu Feb 2 Bolton v Arsenal 6.53 am Fox 1
Thu Feb 2 Fulham v West Brom 6.53 am Viewers Choice

A-LEAGUE LIVE

Thu Jan 26	Victory v Sydney FC	4.00 pm
Fri Jan 27	Gold Coast v Mariners	8.00 pm
Sat Jan 28	Brisbane v Newcastle	7.45 pm
Sun Jan 29	Wellington v Melb Heart	2.30 pm
Sun Jan 29	Adelaide v Perth	5.00 pm

FOX SPORTS FC
Tue Jan 31 8.30 pm

31 tv now!

The Futbol Town Show
Every Tuesday 7pm

Extra Time
Magazine Show
Every Tuesday 7.30pm

SMFC TV
Channel 31
Every Wed 7pm

The Green Gully Football Show
Every Saturday 10.30am

Alvaro Rodriguez's

Planet Football
Zambia

NAME: Zambia
CAPITAL: Lusaka
POPULATION: (2009 approx.) 12,935,000
CONFEDERATION: CAF
INTERNATIONAL HONOURS: African Nations Cup runners-up 1974, 1994; **COSAFA(Southern African) Cup winners** 1997, '98, 2006, runners-up 2004, '05, '07; CECAFA(East & Central African) Cup winners 1984, 1991, 2006, runners-up 1976, '77, '78, 1988, 2006
FIFA WORLD RANKING: 71st

WHO ARE YA?

The Republic of Zambia is a landlocked country in southern Africa, bordered by a whopping eight nations. The land was originally inhabited by hunter-gatherer tribes of the Khoisan people(although their presence there cannot be traced back further than 300 AD), before the arrival of neighbouring Nkoya and Bantu peoples, the latter coming from what would now be Botswana. However it would be the arrival of Europeans in the late 18th/early 19th Century that would change the fate of this land - a Portuguese explorer, Dr. Francisco de Lacerda was documented as one of the first, before the eventual arrival and annexation of the land by the British Empire. Just before that, however, was the incredible story of Scottish missionary David Livingstone, who became the subject of a search/expedition led by explorer/journalist Henry Stanley. Upon finding the elusive missionary, Stanley greeted him with the immortal phrase, "Dr. Livingstone, I presume?" - although the famous encounter took place in what is now Tanzania, Livingstone did trek across what is now Zambia over the course of his travels - indeed, it was he who christened the waterfall along the Zambezi River(which begins in Zambia), 'Victoria Falls', and the nearby town of Livingstone is named in his honour.

It was the British South Africa Company which established the administrative unit of North-Eastern Rhodesia, which would merge with its northwestern counterpart in 1911 to form Northern Rhodesia, named for Cecil Rhodes of the Company. Attempts to merge this with Rhodesia proper(now Zimbabwe) and Nyasaland(now Malawi) were unpopular, and after a period of white-minority rule(although seemingly without the apartheid excesses seen in South Africa and elsewhere), black-majority pro-independence parties formed and in 1964 Northern Rhodesia became Zambia(named after the Zambezi River), and the new republic promptly left the British Commonwealth, which it has not rejoined despite its historical links.

The United National Independence Party(UNIP) came to power upon independence, and would remain so along with its leader and Zambian president Kenneth Kaunda until 1991, with the period from 1972 onwards as the only legal political party. Just as worrying for certain observers was Kaunda's cordial relations with such enemies of the West as the Soviet Union and even Iraq's Ba'ath Party under Saddam Hussein; although despite such cosying-up to socialist despotism he was also an outspoken opponent of apartheid and allowed the African National Congress, as well as other revolutionary movements across Africa, to set up base in Zambia. Following increased political unrest in 1990, Kaunda bowed to public pressure and promised to stand down as president and reinstate multi-party democracy in Zambia, which he did. Despite its share of economic hiccups and institutionalised corruption throughout the 1990s as legacies of the Kaunda era, the country has since reaped something of an economic miracle, with the World Bank naming Zambia as one of the world's fastest-economically-reformed nations in 2010.

Emmanuel Mayuka(in middle) dribbles out of his Senegalese markers' way in the African Nations Cup.

Just in case the GPS isn't working...

SO WHAT YOU DONE?

Football is the main sport in Zambia, although the country has largely failed to realise its considerable potential on the global stage, not unlike Ghana prior to their maiden World Cup finals in 2006. The country made its presence felt in regional competitions the CECAFA and COSAFA Cups during the mid-1970s, and the Zambians reached the Final in their maiden African Nations Cup appearance in 1974. However the country's greatest honours have been restricted to the two aforementioned regional tournaments, and Zambia's other noteworthy African Nations Cup showing was in 1994, where they again finished second, despite being a regular qualifier for the continental showpiece. It is still yet to qualify for the World Cup, but it could have been all so different, and their second-place at the '94 ANC would not have been a mere consolation prize...

The previous year 1993, Zambia was on track for a maiden World Cup appearance, leading Group B of final-round qualifying ahead of Senegal and favourites Morocco. On April 27th the Zambian squad set off for a qualifier away to Senegal in Dakar, flying a DHC-5 Buffalo transport plane especially chartered by the Zambian Air Force. A combination of engine trouble and pilot error was later found to have caused the plane to crash into the Atlantic coast of Gabon, killing all 30 passengers and crew, including all but 3 of the full-strength national squad. The Zambian nation fell into a state of mourning and deep shock, but the Zambian FA cobbled together a new NT from fringe and youth players who, led by the lucky few to miss the fateful flight, pushed their luck and came to within a point of qualifying for USA '94, edged out by the Moroccans. The remains of the crash victims were buried beneath a monument erected in their memory, Heroes' Acre, outside the national Independence Stadium in Lusaka. Only five years earlier the Zambians had shocked the world by defeating Italy and Guatemala 4-0 each in their group matches at the 1988 Seoul Olympics, which secured Zambia a quarter-final berth against West Germany, at which point they faltered(the Olyroos were likewise bundled out at this stage by the Soviet Union, having beaten Yugoslavia in the group stage).

The cream of Zambian football were lost in that 1993 plane crash, and for years afterward the national team fell into a lull, unsure if it would reach the heights suggested by the promise of that lost team. After nearly 20 years of heartache however, the signs for the future are at last looking bright.

BIG CLUBS

The top-flight(Zambian Premier League) is home to Nkana Red Devils FC, with 11 titles, 6 cups and 7 Zambian Challenge Cups, as well as runners-up in the 1990 African Champions League(then known as the African Cup Of Champions) to JS Kabylie of Algeria. Mufulira Wanderers are close with 9 league titles, 10 cups and 9 Challenge Cups although lack pedigree at continental level. One of the next-strongest clubs, Power Dynamos FC does boast the honour of being the only other Zambian club besides Nkana to reach a continental final - twice in their case(runners-up in the 1982 and winners of the 1991 editions of the African Cup-Winners' Cup).

REP YOUR COLORS

Nicknamed Chipolopolo (The Copper Bullets), the Zambian NT currently wears an orange top with green trims, shorts in the latter colour and socks matching the shirt. The away strip is all-white, and during the France '98 qualifiers the logo of then-kitmaker Reebok was heavily incorporated into the away strip. As for the clubs, Power Dynamos wear a black/red striped number more in the fashion of Altona Magic and Dandenong Thunder than AC Milan with red shorts and black socks, whilst Nkana wear an all-red kit befitting their Man U-inspired nickname.

MATCHWINNERS

Kalusha Bwalya is Zambia's greatest-ever player, making his name with a hat-trick against Italy at the 1988 Olympics, after which he embarked on a globetrotting club career with the likes of PSV Eindhoven, Cercle Brugge, the UAE's Al-Wahda and a Mexican sojourn across six clubs(most notably América and Necaxa). He was also named 1988's African Footballer of the Year ahead of Cameroon legend Roger Milla. Despite being the highest-profile player to miss the fateful flight in 1993, his career nonetheless entered its decline afterward, although he played on for his country until 2004 amassing 100 caps and 50 international goals - within 2 years of retirement he assumed the coaching reins of the national team, leading the Copper Bullets for three years before becoming an administrator at the Zambian FA.

Of the current crop, striker Emmanuel Mayuka is the country's only European-based starter, currently plying his trade for Young Boys Bern of Switzerland after a stint with Israel's Maccabi Tel-Aviv. Only this week he made headlines for scoring the first goal of Zambia's 2-1 African Nations Cup win over Senegal, putting them in the box-seat for Wednesday's clash against Libya. Although national skipper Christopher Katongo currently plays for Chinese Super League side Henan Jianye(current home of former Adelaide United favourite Marcos Flores), the remainder of the Copper Bullets mainly play either at home or in South Africa's ABSA Premiership, although interestingly six recent Zambian call-ups are currently on the books of DR Congo powerhouse TP Mazembe, giant-killers at the 2010 Club World Cup.

SO WHAT NOW?

At the time of writing the Copper Bullets are less than 48 hours away from their African Nations Cup Group A clash against Libya, with a comfortable victory virtually assuring the Copper Bullets of progression to the second round, although they are yet to play Libya's first-game victors and tournament co-hosts Equatorial Guinea. Given the other host is Gabon, the very country off whose coast the doomed flight crashed nearly 20 years ago, a great showing - let alone progression to the semis or better-would go a long way to putting the past's ghosts to rest; although there is also the trifling matter of World Cup second-round qualifiers later this year where the Zambians' only real rival in Group D is Ghana... could this be the Copper Bullets' best chance to finally qualify for world football's big dance? It just might be...

Man Utd Oz Tour 1967

BLAST FROM THE PAST

With Roy Hay

Red Devils Visit Australia

Manchester United's pre-season tour to Australia in 1967 helped set up Matt Busby's team for its eventual European Cup triumph over Benfica in May 1968.

United arrived on the back of a English first division championship win and proceeded to demolish most of its opposition. George Best, Denis Law and Bobby Charlton headlined the United squad which played Queensland (7-0), a Sydney eleven (3-0), Victoria (1-1 and 4-0), Northern NSW (3-0), New South Wales (3-1), South Australia (5-1) and Western Australia (7-0). It was the Victorians who organised the tour according to George Wallace and then the Australian Soccer Federation and the other states jumped on the bandwagon. The tour was sponsored by the tobacco company WD & H O Wills.

United opened with an easy win over Queensland on Sunday 4 June. The crowd was given as 30,000, which was an all-time Queensland record according to Soccer World. Noel Cantwell was played up front in the absence of Denis Law who was injured. Cantwell got the opener after 8 minutes and John Aston, Best and Charlton each scored twice. A Sydney select was then put to sword on the Wednesday. Denis Law came in for much booing by the crowd after an incident involving Sydney player Ron Giles whose cheekbone was fractured. After the game the United players had a whip-round which raised $500 for the injured player.

Against Victoria on 11 June at Olympic Park with 31,638 crammed into the ground, Manchester United quickly realised that it would not be a walk-over. Early corners by Best and Aston were dealt with by keeper Willie Schroif and Dick van Alphen. Jimmy Armstrong and Frank Micic both had shots which hit the side-netting as Victoria took the game to United in a series of breakaways. Half-time arrived with no score and Manchester replaced John Ryan by 17-year-old Brian Kidd. Hammy McMeechan and Johnny Sanchez began to exert influence on the game, but it was United which took the lead in 57 minutes from a Bobby Charlton thunderbolt.

In the other matches to that date, the first goal had opened the floodgates, but Victoria was level two minutes later. There was a touch of luck about it as van Alphen's long ball was deflected by David Sadler and rolled out of the reach of Alex Stepney, with the home crowd willing it over the line. Victorian coach Mike de Bruyckere ensured that the team did not sit back and try to defend the lead. Armstrong and Atti Abonyi had chances late in the game to become instant heroes, but it finished one-all. Bobby Charlton thought it was a shocking performance by United, but the Victorians could not stop smiling.

United backed up the following day in Newcastle where they arrived in the early hours of the morning. Still they recorded a three-nil win and then accounted for New South Wales in Sydney by three-one on 18th June.

The second game against Victoria three days later saw United, with Denis Law back in the team, determined to wipe out the memory of their poorest effort on the tour. An early own goal by Billy Cook set the Victorians on their heels and this time there was no scoring response. Two goals to Law and one to Best gave United a clear win.

United completed its tour with two more matches in Adelaide and Perth. South Australia did score against United in front of another large attendance at the Olympic Sports Field.

The Reds scored 33 goals and conceded 3 and the only point dropped was to Victoria.

Match details against Victoria

Victoria 1 *(Sadler 59'og)* **Manchester United 1** *(Charlton 57')*
Olympic Park, Melbourne. June 11, 1967. Att: 31,638.
Referee: Dave Maitland.
VICTORIA: *Willie Schroif; George Keith, David High; Billy Cook, Dick van Alphen, Tommy Randles; Atti Abonyi, Frank Micic, John Sanchez, Jim Armstrong (John Anderson 81'), Hammy McMeechan.*
Coach: Mike de Bruyckere.
UNITED: *Alex Stepney, Shay Brennan, Tony Dunne, John Fitzpatrick, David Sadler, Nobby Stiles, George Best, Jimmy Ryan (Brian Kidd 46'), Noel Cantwell, Bobby Charlton, John Aston.*
Manager: Matt Busby.

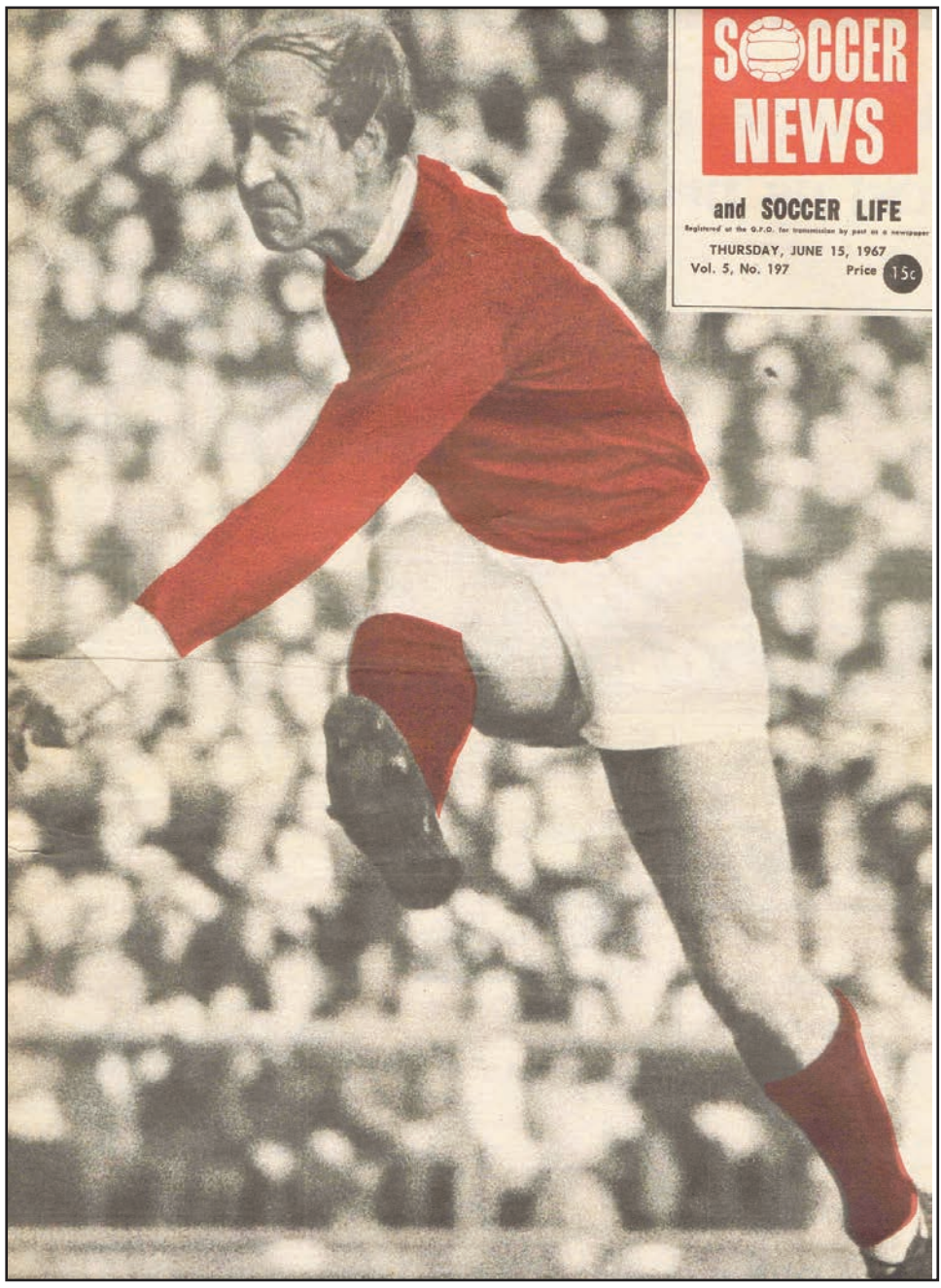
Victoria 0 Manchester United 4 *(Cook 4'og, Law -' 86', Best 70')*
Olympic Park, Melbourne. June 21, 1967. Att: 18,892.
Referee: Tommy Edwards.
VICTORIA: *Willie Schroif; George Keith, David High; Billy Cook, Dick van Alphen (Jimmy Mackay 23'), Tommy Randles; Mike Jurecki, Atti Abonyi (Jim Armstrong 46'), John Sanchez, Frank Micic, Hammy McMeechan. Coach: Mike de Bruyckere.*
UNITED: *Alex Stepney, Shay Brennan, Tony Dunne, David Sadler, Bill Foulkes, Nobby Stiles, George Best, Bobby Charlton, Denis Law, Brian Kidd, John Aston.*
Manager: Matt Busby.

Manchester United on tour in Australia, 1967. Back row left to right: Noel Cantwell, Brian Kidd, Denis Law, David Sadler, Nobby Stiles, Pat Crerand, Jimmy Rimmer. Middle row: Alex Stepney, Frank Kopel, Tony Dunne, Seamus Brennan, Bobby Charlton, Bill Foulkes. Front row: George Best, John Ryan, John Fitzpatrick, Alan Gowling, John Aston. Photo: Laurie Schwab collection, Deakin University Library.

Manchester United tour 1967

Date	Match	Venue	Attendance
4 June 1967	Queensland 0 Manchester United 7	Exhibition ground	27000
7 June 1967	Sydney 0 Manchester United 3	Sydney Showgrounds	
11 June 1967	Victoria 1 Manchester United 1	Olympic Park	31638
12 June 1967	Northern NSW 0 Manchester United 3	Newcastle	
18 June 1967	New South Wales 1 Manchester United 3	Sydney Showgrounds	
21 June 1967	Victorian State League 0 Manchester Utd 4	Olympic Park	18892
24 June 1967	South Australia 1 Manchester United 5	Olympic Sports Field	27000
27 June 1967	Western Australia 0 Manchester United 7	WACA Ground	

Roger Romanowicz punches clear from George Best and John Fitzpatrick when South Australia played Manchester United at the Olympic Sports Field in Adelaide in 1967, watched by Nilo Rusalen (8) and Denis Law. Photo: Laurie Schwab collection, Deakin University Library.



Charlton thunderbolt. Photo: Uwe Kuessner, Soccer News, 15 June 1967.

On behalf of everyone at Futsal Oz we would like to extend the very best of wishes to all of our teams, participants, fans, sponsors and supporters.
We look forward to seeing you all again in 2012.

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V-LEAGUE NIKE PREMIERSHIP

Round Ten

THE VICTORIAN HOME OF FUTSAL
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By Jimmy Soufis

North Melb and Pascoe Vale dominate

Mirza Pedic (R) on his way to blasting one of his four goals

Cameron Holmes (L) & Maxi Avram (R) were the difference for Prahran on the night

Ivan Zilic was back to his brilliant best hitting 5 in the rout

North Melbourne 9-2 Ashburton

The first clash of the night saw the defending champions the North Melbourne Vipers take on the Green Machine Ashburton.

They kicked off the night in real style with Mirza Pedic opening the scoring which was followed up by a beautiful chip by Thiago Priori to give them a 2-0 lead. Ashburton were hardly getting a shot on goal and the Vipers playing their stunning possession game kept Ashburton at bay as Pedic grabbed his second of the night.

The northerners were granted a penalty after some great work from Kui Mu the penalty was converted by futsalroo Jonathan Barrientos. Priori kept the rout going with his 2nd followed by another 2 from Pedic which saw him register his 4th of the night. Jermaine Deng got one back for his side but it was quickly overturned with Priori Suring up his hat-trick and Alex Jankovic getting on the score sheet.

Deng managed to grab himself a rare double but it was not enough for Ashburton who slip into 7th as for North they kept up the pace on league leaders Pascoe Vale.

Pascoe Vale 11-1 Essendon

After watching North Melbourne go top Pascoe Vale came up against a rampaging Essendon.

Lead by Joao Da Silva the Lions made light work of the Wanderers as Da Silva grabbed the first 3 goals of the game to put Pascoe in a commanding position. The return of Mark Burton showed in Pascoe's game as they were passing more comfortably and looking dangerous every time they went forward.

The Lions newest signing Italian born Robert Armellini made his debut for the club along with Cem Biser in goals. Brenno Pollatti added to Essendons woes finishing off a brilliant passing move; Joao grabbed his 4th of the night sending a message of intent to the rest of the competition.

Diego Assaeda ruined the Lions chances of obtaining a clean sheet but that didn't seem to faze them with Vadim Mazursky scoring twice and Joao rounding the keeper for his 5h. It was only fitting that Burton would cap off the result following some great work from his skipper. The win saw Pascoe Vale stay top and Essendon slip out of the 4 once again.

Fitzroy 4-6 Prahran

The 3rd clash of the night saw struggling Fitzroy take on high flying Prahran. Fitzroy raced out of the blocks with new signing Josh Berrios grabbing the opener and Manny Karas hitting a superb free kick to stun Prahran & take a 2-0 lead.

Cameron Holmes hit back soon after but it was that man Berrios stealing the limelight putting the Flying Foxes 3-1 ahead. Prahran called a timeout as Michael Chami rallied his troops and it seemed to pay off scoring from the restart with a Clint Mogoi header from a brilliant throw from Chami.

There was drama soon after as Mogoi was shown a second yellow, Berrios made Prahran pay for it sealing his hat-trick and putting Fitzroy in unfamiliar territory. Prahran were throwing all they had at Fitzroy but Greg Lascaris was keeping them at bay making a string of fine saves. Prahran seemed to break the Foxes back tho when Marcos Barbosa got one back and Maxi Avram scored possibly goal of the week. Cameron Holmes played a massive part in the closing stages assisting both of the final goals for Maxi & Barbosa. Prahran keep up the pace on the top 2 while Fitzroy sink lower into the relegation battle.

Balwyn 13-2 Mickleham

As the night rolled on the next clash saw a depleted Mickleham take on wounded Balwyn side itching to prove themselves to the rest of the competition.

Mark McGough opened the scoring for Mickleham although it didn't last long with Ivan Zilic and Mark Saric giving Balwyn the lead early. McGough got his second and levelled the scores once again. Tony Saric put Balwyn ahead again with a tidy finish. Nobody could predict that Robert Zadwarny would score possibly the quickest hat-trick in V-League history.

Tony Saric continued his purple patch of scoring form grabbing his second of the night & Captain Tony Imeri got on the scoresheet aswell after some great work from Zilic. Zilic banged another one past a helpless Jamie Tran followed by a fourth goal by Zadwarny. Zilic finished the game off in real style scoring 3 late goals and giving him 5 for the night. The win puts Balwyn into the four as Mickleham stumbled again dropping down to 8th and looking like slipping into the relegation battles.

Metropolitan 11-4 Brimbank

Metropolitan have begun their climb up the table which Brimbank are battling to get out of the relegation zone. However it was Brimbank who made the quicker start through Messinovic who grabbed a quick fire double. Yusuf Avdic hit back for the sky blues but another laps in concentration let Vasilevski put the bulls 3-1 ahead.

Muhammed Kuzuchu was having a blinder of a night doing all he could to sustain Brimbanks's lead. Alexander Stevanovic got one back which was followed by a quick fire double to Alija Redzepovic.

Tomoslav Grigic got another to extend Metro's lead which was followed by 5 minutes of high drama Messinovic was shown a straight red card & Alija Karic a second yellow causing the bulls to lose their cool this was the perfect opportunity to strike and Metro took it with open arms first Stevanovic grabbed his second of the night followed by another to Alija. Stevanovic put away his hat-trick in style. Alicevic got one back but Avdic & Alija had the last laugh, the win see's Metro jump into the top 6 while Brimbank continue to struggle in 11th place.

Brunswick 7-2 Richmond FC

The final clash of Round 10 was between the two bottom sides in the V-League. They sure didn't show it as Ruz Roslan opened Brunswick's account. Jose Portillio continued his amazing from scoring another belter. Richnmond got one back through Amonail and gave the killer bees a chance. Roslan drove home another to push Brunwick to a 3-1 lead.

Portillio uncharacteristically missed a penalty but it was just a blemish on an otherwise perfect performance from Brunwick which continued through Roslan who got his hat-trick & Portillio as this deadly strike partnership continued to blossom and saw Brunswick jump ahead 5-1. Brunswick bound Mohammed Algorabi got one back in his final game in the yellow and black, unfortunetly only a consolation as Marusic scored an unbelievable backheel to make it 6-2 but the game was finished of in real style as Portillio completed his hat-trick with a stunner that lift brunwick to 10th and within touching distance of the 8 while Richmond sit dead last and look certain to be relegated at this stage

V-League Standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
1 Pascoe Vale FC	9	8	1	0	70	26	44	25
2 North Melbourne FC	8	8	0	0	55	19	35	24
3 FC Prahran	10	7	2	1	60	35	25	22
4 FC Balwyn	10	5	0	5	52	52	0	15
5 FC Essendon	10	5	0	5	58	62	-4	15
6 Metropolitan FC	10	4	1	5	71	60	11	13
7 Ashburton FC	10	4	1	5	45	60	-15	13
8 Mickleham FC	9	3	1	5	48	56	-8	10
9 Fitzroy FC	9	3	1	5	36	48	-12	10
10 CF Brunswick	9	3	0	6	42	61	-19	9
11 Brimbank FC	10	2	2	6	38	58	-20	8
12 FC Richmond	10	0	2	8	34	71	-37	2

Round 10 RESULTS Wed 25th Jan

- 6:30 North Melbourne FC v Ashburton FC 7 - 2
- 7:15 Pascoe Vale FC v FC Essendon 11 - 1
- 8:00 Fitzroy FC v FC Prahran 4 - 6
- 8:45 Mickleham FC v FC Balwyn 2 - 13
- 9:30 Metropolitan FC v Brimbank FC 11 - 4
- 10:15 CF Brunswick v FC Richmond 7 - 2

Round 11 CLASHES Wed 2nd Feb

6:30 CF Brunswick v Brimbank FC
- 7:15 FC Prahran v Ashburton FC
- 8:00 Pascoe Vale FC FC v FC Richmond
- 8:45 North Melbourne FC v FC Balwyn
- 9:30 Fitzroy FC v FC Essendon
- 10:15 Mickleham FC v Metropolitan FC

Top Goal Scorers

1) M. Avram FCP - 19
2) J. Da Silva PVFC - 18
3) A. Redzepovic Metro FC - 17
4) A. Nabbout FCE - 17

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Photos By
JIMMY SOUFIS

PICS OF ROUND 18

Les Shorrock's Action Packed Picture Page

This little team of supporters apply the father/son rule to Sydney FC. Photo: GEOFF JONES

Heart supporters show they have pleny of fanfare up their sleeve. Photo: ANITA MILAS

Mascots make their way off the pitch after completing their duties. Photo: TIM SIZE

Glory's Shane Smeltz has his name up in lights with a brace against Victory. Photo: EDUARDO MORGAN

This young man flies the flag for Sydney FC as his heroes manage a late win over Gold Coast United. Photo: GEOFF JONES

Perth Glory owner Tony Sage with his entourage prior to the 4-1 whitewash over Melbourne Victory. Photo: EDUARDO MORGAN

Young at Heart: Fans at AAMI Park watching Melbourne Heart's 1-1 draw with Brisbane Roar. Photo: TIME SIZE

Time for Copa Libertadores action, señoras y señores!

Latin Wrap

Francis **Fields**

All is ready for the Libertadores to begin. South America's CONMEBOL has finalised its last details regarding the fixture, schedule dates and times for the first opening phase and the second group phase.

Arsenal de Sarandí made the perfect start to their Copa Libertadores playoff tie with a 3-0 first-leg win over Sport Huancayo.

A spot in the group stages alongside six-time winners Boca Juniors, Brazilian side Fluminense and Venezuelan outfit Zamora await the Argentine side if they can hold off Huancayo in the return leg in Peru.

The "viaduct" back with a bang

Arsenal de Sarandí is quite young and has not stamped its presence of such in the Libertadores.

With the rights to open the 2012 edition, the 53rd Libertadores as the club based in the Buenos Aires outskirts of Sarandí, the Julio Humberto Grondona stadium, it won its opening tie yesterday with a comprehensive 3-0 victory over Sport Huancayo of Peru.

Jorge Córdoba opened the scoring on 22 minutes before Arsenal found their second through Emilio Zelaya shortly before half-time at the Estadio Julio H. Grondona.

Arsenal had complete control of the match until Carlos Carbonero, making his debut for the club, was sent off on the hour mark.

However, the home side were not made to pay for their numerical disadvantage and instead added a third through substitute Claudio Mosca in the 88th minute.

It is a great opportunity for Arsenal to erase its previous participation in the tournament back in 2008 where they exited in the opening round. The club identified as the "viaduct" is looking forward to its second appearance and playing Sport Huancayo is a special moment for the club.

For the Peruvian side, finishing third in the domestic Descentralizado championship of 2011 was a huge achievement. It is their second international continental appearance after making their debut in the Copa Sudamericana of 2010.

In the other opening match played on Wednesday in Quito, it was Ecuadorian club El Nacional meanwhile who will take the slenderest of leads into the second leg of their playoff after a 1-0 win over Peru's Libertad at the Atahualpa stadium in heavy fog.

Juan Anangono scored the only goal of the game two minutes from time and despite the hosts laying siege to Libertad's goal in the final 20 minutes, El Nacional could not find a second goal.

The Paraguayan club reached its own milestone with 100 games in the Copa Libertadores. Quite a feat for a club that evolves around the shadows of their fellow country team giants Olimpia and Cerro Porteño. Libertad host El Nacional in the return leg on January 31.

A stiff test for many of the continental giants

With over half a century of competition, the 2012 edition features giant clubs by the name of Atlético Nacional of Medellín, Porto Alegre's Internacional of Brazil who face an exciting clash against Colombia's Once Caldas of Manizales.

The latter is arguably the highest profile match in the opening qualifying round as it contests the 2006 and 2010 champions is Internacional up against the holders from 2004.

Internacional can still call upon the services of many key men from that 2010 triumph and have made few changes during the recent close season – the signing of gifted ex-São Paulo attacker Dagoberto being a notable exception.

What's more, the likes of Leandro Damião and Oscar were just testing the first-team waters two years ago and have since gone on to become vital cogs an Internacional side coached by Dorival Junior.

Also providing the team with a timely boost is the presence of inspirational Argentinian schemer Andrés D'Alessandro, who remains available despite being in negotiations for a move to Chinese football.

Well aware of the firepower at Inter's disposal, Once Caldas boss Pompilio Páez was quick to put the favourites' tag on the Brazilian outfit after the draw. However, his own charges should also be feeling the benefits of stability, having largely kept the squad together that finished runners-up in the Colombian Clausura and which has shown encouraging pre-season form.

"Over the past two years we've put in well-balanced performances in the Libertadores," said Páez. "We're a good team on our travels and we need to play with intelligence, defend well, create chances and put them away."

Also qualified are Peñarol and its fellow Uruguayan rival Nacional, Paraguay's Olimpia of Asunción, Rio de Janeiro giants Fluminense, Vasco Da Gama and Flamengo, current Libertadores holders Santos, and the recently crowned Sudamericana winners Universidad de Chile.

The ever popular and recent Argentine champion Boca Juniors are back in the spotlight along with one of the toughest Argentinian sides of late in international tournaments, Vélez Sarsfield.

Re-writing a bit of Copa Libertadores history for 2012 is its Venezuelan debutant. Hailing from a small club in the city of Barinas and founded in 1977 is Zamora FC.

Only in the last few years has the club made an impact in the professional pyramid of Venezuelan domestic football's top flight. Zamora FC play Boca in the opening first phase although their odds are not in favour of an upset over Julio César Falcioni's in-form "xeneize" side.

It is the beginning of a new era, of a new dream for José Vera, coach of Zamora.

On the same footing as every other qualifying team in the Copa Libertadores, - without any major titles in its 35 years of existence up until taking out the 2011 Clausura or closing championship of Venezuela.

It will strictly on themselves whether or not they can progress in the tournament and along the way, cause upsets. Up against Boca Juniors in the second round group phase, this is a chance for the Venezuelan champion to create history.

Drawn in Group 4, Zamora is also up against none other than Fluminense and the winner of Arsenal de Sarandí and Sport Huancayo which are all proving to be tough assignments.

Medellín back in the spotlight

Atlético Nacional, the most successful cup winner from Colombia will attempt its 15th appearance in this year's Copa.

With one title under its wing and runners-up once, the Medellín side secured its spot by winning the Opening domestic tournament of 2011 and drawn in the "Group of death" alongside recent Copa Sudamericana champions Universidad de Chile, Godoy Cruz and the winner of the first round tie between two giants from their respective countries, Peñarol of Uruguay up against Caracas FC of Venezuela.

The Medellín side, known as the "verdolaga" has been preparing for the continental big stage with various friendly tournaments. Coach Santiago Escobar spoke to Caracol television about his team's chances. "Up front, we have a lot of options and this is exactly what we need. We have been planning for the Libertadores for months", in reference to the signing of attacking midfielder Macnelly Torres alongside international forwards Dorlán Pabón and Peru's Johan Fano.

Will Colombia's "King of Cups" be able to cause upsets in its tough group draw and repeat its successful 1989 title-winning campaign or even replicate its run in 1995? It all remains to be seen.

On another note, the Colombian notoriously known for its drug-trafficking past, its colourful and attractive women are promoting the well-being and the game of football at government level.

The coveted Libertadores tournament trophy sitting quietly alongside the official match ball ahead of its opening match tomorrow.

Juan Govea of Ecuador's El Nacional (L), vies for the ball against Miguel Samudio of Paraguay's Libertad during their Copa Libertadores opening match yesterday at the Atahualpa stadium in Quito, Ecuador.

The sharks looking for another bite

Long gone are the days when the Copa Libertadores of 1994 witnessed Junior of Barranquilla headed by the midfield wizard Carlos Valderrama and his hairdo steer the club to a historic semi final campaign.

It was Vélez Sarsfield that spoiled the Colombian club's aspirations whom later when on to conquer the Americas with the coveted trophy and beat the mighty AC Milan in the Intercontinental Cup in Tokyo later that year.

However, that Junior side of 1994 was one of creativity, flair and bolstered by the goals of forward Iván René Valenciano. That run of success and goals were extinguished in the Libertadores edition of 1996 that the now second division giant River Plate took the honours. Unfortunately, Junior did not reappear until last year in 2011 where their luck ended in the round of 16.

Junior are in the Libertadores for 2012 and look to extend its fortunes around. They look like the side capable of playing "beautiful football", full of enthusiasm, with depth in the squad and with confidence after taking the domestic Colombian title.

It was full of drama, defeating Once Caldas in the final and knocking out giants Millonarios in the semis of the Torneo Finalización. Their downside was the selling of goalscorer Carlos Bacca to Club Bruges of Belgium.

This time round, it is Giovanni Hernández who fills in the shoes of Valderrama and are drawn in Group 3 with Bolivian giants Bolívar, Chilean semi-finalists Universidad Católica and the winner of the first phase tie between Mexico's Apertura champion Tigres UANL versus the overall Chilean championship runner-up, Unión Española.

Mexican club Tigres, for their part have arrived in Santiago, Chile just before their first leg against Unión Española and also intend to rest several key men.

Such decision grants an opportunity for seven of their promising youngsters including 17-year-old attacking midfielder Jorge Espericueta, who caught the eye in Mexico's triumph on home soil at the FIFA U-17 World Cup 2011. Prolific Chilean forward Héctor Mancilla is available, but will only be used in the return leg.

Actions gets underway for the Barranquilla side on the 8th of February away against the aforementioned winner between the current Mexican champion and the Spanish community-backed Chilean side.

Nilmar presented at São Paulo

Lancenet! reports that Brazilian club giant São Paulo could announce the signing of Nilmar yesterday, having agreed a deal with investors to purchase the player. The club have kept the Number 11 shirt unregistered in order to register the Villarreal star, who is expected to fly into Brazil in the coming days to complete proceedings.

With Osvaldo's purchase close to completion, the deals should represent São Paulo's final activity of an off-season which has seen them add the likes of Bruno Cortês and Jadson to an already impressive squad.

There has been much speculation that Casemiro could be used as a makeweight in any Nilmar deal, having fallen out of favour at the Morumbí stadium, but there has been no comment on the matter from either club.

Ronaldinho awarded highest honour in Bolivia

Ronaldinho flew off with the Flamengo squad to Bolivia last week for a Libertadores match on Thursday in one of the world's highest stadiums despite having threatened not to play while he is owed five months' wages.

The former Barcelona and AC Milan forward was among 16 players who left for next week's match away to Real Potosi, who, at 4,070 metres above sea level, are believed to have the world's highest first division stadium.

Reports in local media say Ronaldinho is owed 3.75 million Brazilian reais ($2.1 million) by the sports marketing firm Traffic who pay part of the former FIFA World Player-of-the-Year's salary.

The club said they were counting on Ronaldinho, who joined Flamengo from AC Milan a year ago, to play in the first leg of the preliminary round tie.

The 1981 Libertadores winner could have difficulty with the altitude in Bolivia but the Rio de Janeiro club should advance. The victor will move into Group 2 with Olimpia, Emelec and Lanús.

"We are not working with the possibility of him not playing," club president Patricia Amorim said at Flamengo headquarters.

"It looks like things will be sorted out. We're giving Traffic options with a view to a happy ending," she told a news conference shortly after the team's departure.

Ronaldinho's brother and agent Roberto Assis told media he had reached a deal with the club and Traffic with the promise that the debt would be paid on Wednesday. He said Ronaldinho had only boarded the plane to Bolivia after that promise was made, adding there were no guarantees over the player's future at the club.

"Flamengo came here, we had a meeting, we talked quite a lot about the situation and the club has until Wednesday to take a stance and come to an agreement with Traffic," Assis told the Globo sports website.

"Nothing has been settled yet. Flamengo said they would do all they could to resolve the problem. I believe it's in noone's interest to carry on like this," he added.

Flamengo, who will spend a week acclimatising in Sucre at 2,800 metres before their match in the famous mining town of Potosi on next Wednesday, may have managed to take Ronaldinho with them but appear to have lost central defender Alex Silva due to indiscipline.

Chivas sacks coach, Tecos appoint new boss

Chivas Coach Fernando Quirarte has resigned after Guadalajara's worst start to a Mexican championship. The Mexican club giants are bottom of the Clausura standings after a third consecutive defeat on Saturday night, a 2-0 upset at home to promoted Tijuana who went top of the table.

Quirarte, nicknamed "the Sheriff" and a former Guadalajara and Mexico international forward announced that he had handed in his resignation to sporting director Rafael Ortega after the match at the club's impressive Omnilife stadium.

"I'm stepping aside because I haven't reversed the results and because I love this club. I hope the person who comes (in my place) can do what I couldn't," a red-eyed Quirarte told reporters.

Quirarte took charge of Chivas in October for the second half of the Apertura, first of two championships in the Mexican season, and steered them to the top of the standings making them top seeds for the knockout phase.

However, his team were upset by modest Querétaro, who had finished eighth in the standings, in the two-legged quarterfinals.

Tijuana went top of the Clausura standings with seven points, ahead of Santos Laguna on goal difference. They could be joined by Toluca or title holders Tigres UANL, who both have four points and clash on Sunday.

Argentine striker José Sand scored both Tijuana's goals, netting his first when Chivas keeper Luis Michel spilt the ball at a corner after a quarter of an hour.

Substitute defender Juan Carlos Núñez cleared Guadalajara's best chance from striker Marco Fabián de la Mora off the line in the 77th and Sand added Tijuana's second six minutes from time when he deflected a shot from Colombian fellow striker Duvier Riascos into the net.

Quirarte is the second coach to have resigned after only three rounds of matches in the Clausura following José Luís Salgado's departure from Estudiantes UAG Tecos a week ago.

Tecos have confirmed today the appointment of Argentinian coach and former player Omar Asad. Known as "El Turco", his previous stints at Independiente de Avellaneda and with Emelec of Ecuador earned the confidence of Tecos' board for a sixth-month contract with the purpose of avoiding the relegation drop from the Mexico's top division.

Hughes restores survival hope at Queens Park Rangers

When Tony Fernandes completed his takeover of Queens Park Rangers back in August, there was a feeling amongst most, that Neil Warnock wouldn't last long as manager. The Malaysian entrepreneur has always been ambitious, ever since graduating from the London school of economics, back in 1987. Amongst other triumphs, the 47-year old turned AirAsia, a once-debt riddled company, into Asia's most successful low-cost airline. The man once lauded "crazy" by his colleagues, for taking over the former government-owned Airline, is now viewed by press in Kuala Lumpur - his birth place - as "The Richard Branson of Asia". Fernandes is not a man to wait around and watch his businesses stall, and Warnock would soon find this out.

Warnock's dismissal at the beginning of January was inevitable. In fact, the only surprise was that it hadn't come earlier. Ever since a fortuitous 1-0 win against nine-man Chelsea back in October, QPR have struggled for form. Eight defeats in Warnock's last eleven league games in charge, was far from acceptable, especially when the other newly promoted duo, Swansea City and Norwich City, had made admirable starts to the campaign. Warnock's CV is the equal of most in England's lower divisions (including seven promotions), but with just one season in the top-flight prior to the 2011/12 campaign - with Sheffield United five years ago, a season which ended with relegation - Warnock had little to defend himself with. Once Fernandes called time on the 63-year old's 22-month stay at Loftus road, he needed a coach who was as aspiring and eager as himself, and Mark Hughes was the first man he turned to.

Hughes was the obvious, realistic option. Without a club since leaving Fulham last summer, the Welshman was desperate to return to the game, and two days after Warnock's exit, Hughes was appointed. But had Hughes got his way last summer, he wouldn't be strutting his stuff down in Shepherd's bush right now. The former Barcelona forward seemed certain to join Aston Villa last June, but the midlander's were unimpressed with the course of events that culminated in Hughes activating a break clause in his contract and leaving Fulham. Hughes infamously criticised the club for their lack of ambition, so in QPR has found a club who meet his demands. But there is an irony - a beautiful one if you're Fulham owner Mohammed Al-Fayed, who labelled the 48-year old a "strange man" after his exit - that Hughes has joined a club just three miles away from Craven Cottage, Fulham's ground, and six points below his former employers. However, under Fernandes and Hughes, QPR have, in the long-term at least, the capability to overhaul their neighbours, though isn't the immediate priority.

Mark Hughes hopes to put the spark back into QPR or else his nickname isn't Sparky for nothing.

Sustaining QPR's Premier League status is the primary target for Hughes, and the ex-Wales coach has already made moves in the January transfer market to help him achieve survival. Manchester United striker Federico Macheda and AC Milan left-back Taye Taiwo have both signed loan deals with the club until the end of the campaign, whilst interest remains high in Christopher Samba, Andrew Johnson and Nedum Onuaha - all players Hughes managed whilst in charge of of previous clubs. A move for Chelsea defender Alex fell through due to disagreements over personal terms, whilst an attempt to sign Sao Paulo striker Henrique failed following work permit problems, but the desire to improve the squad is evident.

Hughes' reign began with defeat at Newcastle United two weeks back, but consecutive victories against MK Dons, in the FA cup, and Wigan Athletic have restored some of the pride at Loftus road, where fans are witnessing their first top-flight season since 1996. An intriguing fixture list awaits QPR and Hughes. The hoops face neighbours Chelsea in the cup this weekend, before a trip to Villa Park to take on Aston Villa, a stadium in which Hughes would have been the home manager had things worked out differently. But the 2011 'championship' winners will contest these fixtures with a buoyant attitude and increased confidence, something Hughes is quick to install into his players, a distinct attribute of the Welshman. And despite the acrimonious circumstances in which he left Fulham, Hughes' managerial reputation in Britain remains high. Impressively, Hughes, a Manchester United legend, netting 163 goals during his time at Old Trafford, has always led his sides to a better league position than the one he occupied upon taking over. Blackburn Rovers finished 15th in 2004, before "Sparky" took over, and Hughes left them in 2008 in 7th-place - two places above his next club, Manchester City. Hughes lasted 18 months at the City of Manchester Stadium, but his departure came with the Abu Dhabi-owned side in 6th-place - six points off of a Champions League position with a game in hand. It was a similar story in Hughes' solitary season at Fulham, where the Wrexham-born manager led the Londoners to 8th-place after the Londoners finished the previous campaign in 12th.

"QPR is a raw diamond and hopefully I can contribute into turning it into a diamond," was how Fernandes described the club, last year. And with a manger with the calibre of Hughes alongside the enterprising chairman, the sky seems the limit for QPR.

Medellin's proud hero

By Francis Fields

As Medellín is proud of its three clubs Atlético Nacional, Independiente de Medellín and Envigado. It was a special day on Sunday as the city hosted the 24th edition of the Día del Fútbol Antioqueño.

Played at the Atanasio Girardot stadium, the event raised awareness and money to the 'Héroe Camina' and 'Héroes de la Patria' foundations, both organisations set out to improve the well-being of all members of the Armed Forces.

A match between teams selected by two former Colombia coaches in Hernán Darío Gómez - formerly the national team coach and Luís Fernando Montoya, formerly the coach at Once Caldas.

There was a female football match played prior to the exhibition match and a military parade with a showcase of parachuting and a first-aid demonstration.

Present was former Boca Juniors and Argentina forward Martín Palermo and Chilean legend Iván Zamorano - two close friends of Colombia's all-time favourite boy Carlos Valderrama.

It was undoubtedly a night to remember for the return of Luis Fernando Montoya to the football world as the former Once Caldas coach led his exhibition side to a 3-0 win.

"What a memorable night because all the players played with great humanitarian spirit. They all played the ball and took away their chances at goal. I want to keep preparing myself so that one day I can return to coaching", affirmed the crowd favourite Montoya who remains paraplegic after receiving a bullet to his spinal cord from defending his wife from a house robbery.

A true champion and a fighter of football, of life and an example for all of us to follow.

EPL Wrap

Steven Talevski

City Stomp authority on title race

Mario Balotelli has once again headlined a major weekend in the English Premier League title race scoring a 95th minute penalty to hand Manchester City a 3-2 victory over title rivals Tottenham.

The winner came after Balotelli appeared to have stomped on Spurs midfielder Scott Parker where he escaped without any punishment from referee Howard Webb.

Balotelli went on to be fouled by Ledley King late in injury time and was rewarded with a penalty that he comfortably put away.

The stomp caused a furious reaction from Tottenham Manager Harry Redknapp who felt Balotelli should not have been on the field after the incident.

"I don't like people kicking other people in the head on a football pitch," Redknapp said after the match.

"It is not something I understand. Why should he go and back-heel someone in the head when he is on the floor?"

The Italian international has since been handed a four match ban from the FA for violent conduct and it has yet to be seen if he will appeal the ban which may see him miss the Carling Cup Semi Final return leg against Liverpool along with league games against Aston Villa, Everton and Fulham.

The game which had a quite first half opened up in the second half as Samir Nasri opened the scoring in the 56th minute.

Joleon Lescott quickly double the lead for Manchester City before both Jermaine Defoe and Gareth Bale found the back of the net from outside the penalty area to tie the game at two a piece a mere ten minutes after Nasri's opener.

The loss leaves Tottenham in third place, eight points behind Manchester City and five points behind second placed Manchester United who had a 2-1 victory of rivals Arsenal.

Manchester United began the game as the stronger team but had to wait until injury time in the first half where Ryan Giggs supplied a sublime cross to Antonio Valencia who put his powerful header in the back of the net.

Arsenal equalised in the second half against the run of play as youngster Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain played in Robin van Persie who found the bottom right corner of the goal from inside the penalty area.

However Manchester United regained the lead and won the three points when Danny Welbeck finished of some great play by Antonio Valencia.

The loss leaves Arsenal in fifth spot, five points below Chelsea who sit in fourth and the last European Champions League position.

Chelsea found themselves in a frustrating nil all draw at Carrow Road against Norwich City and could not fully capitalise on the losses from the chasing group of Liverpool and Newcastle United along with Arsenal.

Chelsea manger Andre Villas-Boas has claimed that his side cannot challenge for the Premier League title until they become consistent with results.

"We are in the top three teams for creating chances, but the efficiency was not there and this represents where we are in the table," Villas-Boas said.

"We have to find the consistency for us to get on a winning run which can make this title challenge a little bit more, that is the reality.

"It is not going to be a lack of ambition or motivation. There is always motivation when you play for a top club."

Newcastle United move five points behind Chelsea after suffering a 5-2 thrashing at the hands of Fulham with all of Fulham's goals coming in the second half.

Meanwhile Liverpool now move six points behind Chelsea after a humiliating 3-1 loss to relegation threatened Bolton at the Reebok Stadium.

Goals from Mark Davies, Nigel Reo-Coker and Gretar Rafn Steinsson ensured Bolton moved out of the relegation zone.

Wigan remained on the bottom of the table after they suffered a 3-1 defeat to fellow lower table battlers Queens Park Rangers.

Wigan remain three points below second from bottom Wolverhampton who let a 2-1 lead slip to Aston Vila as on loan striker and ex-Wolverhampton player Robbie Keane struck two stunning goals from outside the penalty area to hand Villa the 3-2 victory.

Blackburn who are also in the relegation zone moved up one position to 18th with a gutsy one all draw away to Everton where David Goodwilie cancelled out Australian Tim Cahill's first goal in 13 months for Everton.

In the two other fixtures this weekend, Sunderland convincingly defeated Swansea two nil while West Bromwich Albion shocked Stoke City at the Britannia Stadium 2-1.

EPL Preview

With the commencement of the FA Cup fourth round headlined by the clash between Liverpool and Manchester United this weekend, the English Premier League returns mid-week with two nights, or mornings for us, of fixtures.

Manchester City will look to remain in top place by themselves when they visit Tim Cahill's Everton while title chasers Manchester United host Stoke City and Tottenham face Wigan at White Hart Lane.

Fourth place Chelsea visit the Liberty Stadium to face Swansea as Arsenal look to close the gap between the two sides when they visit Bolton as Newcastle travel to Blackburn and Liverpool visit the Molinuex Stadium to face Wolverhampton.

In the other Premier League clashes Aston Villa host Queens Park Rangers, West Bromwich Albion visit Fulham and Sunderland face Norwich City at the Stadium of Light.

It's only a flesh wound: Super Mario Balotelli has a squiz to see what all the fuss is about.

No regrets for Neymar

Neymar insists he is satisfied with his decision to reject the advances of Barcelona in order to remain at Santos.

The teenage forward has been heavily linked with a move to Camp Nou over the past few months, but he recently penned a new contract with his club which will keep him in Brazil until 2014.

"I made the right decision," Neymar told Lancenet. "I do not regret staying at Santos at all."

"If it was not for Santos, I would not have the profile I now have inside and outside the country."

"Everything fell into place and I am having a good time, and the team too."

Neymar has been favourably compared with Lionel Messi, but having gone head to head with the Barca forward during the Club World Cup in December, he believes that the Argentine is currently without equal.

"Messi is fantastic," the 19-year-old striker said. "And he has demonstrated with his goals and his playmaking. That is why he is the best in the world. There is no better."

Neymar has already been capped 15 times by his country and has eight international goals to his name.

Neymar insists he is satisfied with his decision to reject the advances of Barcelona in order to remain at Santos.

QPR, Chelsea caution fans

Ahead of Saturday's FA Cup match between the clubs, Chelsea and QPR have issued a joint statement warning fans of unacceptable behaviour.

The Loftus Road fixture will be the first between the two sides since Chelsea skipper John Terry was charged with racially abusing QPR defender Anton Ferdinand on October 23, a match in which the English Premier League newcomers won 1-0.

Terry is required to appear in court on February 1 and has denied the charge.

Both clubs have taken a precautionary step to avoid trouble on Saturday, with Chelsea chairman Bruce Buck and QPR counterpart Tony Fernandes releasing a statement ahead of the match.

"We have discussed the issues surrounding this weekend's FA Cup fourth-round tie at Loftus Road and we are both in total agreement that abuse and discrimination has no place in football or society," the statement said.

"Both clubs enjoy fantastic support. However, we would remind fans that while we want to hear their passion, it's a fact that hatred and abuse is not what being a fan of Chelsea or QPR is about."

"The clubs will work together with the police to ensure that anyone using discriminatory or inflammatory language is identified and that the strongest possible action is taken against them."

"A local derby is always a special occasion and this weekend's FA Cup tie is a unique opportunity to show the world that hatred has no place in our game, our clubs, or our communities."

"We would urge fans witnessing any form of abuse to report it to a match-day steward. Let's make Saturday's match a celebration of football."

The timing of the match has been brought forward, with a mid-day kick-off advised by the police in an attempt to minimise crowd trouble.

London Eye

Robert Davis

The Carlos Tevez Affair

Carlos Tevez waits to hear where his next stop will be.

Kia Joorabchian plays the station master in this instance...

With just under a week left on this years January transfer window, we would have all hoped the most unwelcome player in Manchester would have finally left the country by now. Alas, here we are, Carlos Tevez still at Manchester City. Having not even appeared on the team sheet for them since that night in Munich and currently 'keeping up his fitness' back in his home country of Argentina.

There aren't many people that like Tevez in England, and I'm not one of them. He seems to bring an unbelievable amount of baggage with him wherever he goes, as well as being represented by someone that manages to display everything wrong with football in one go, Kia Joorabchian.

Tevez never used to be such a public hate figure though. In fact it was quite the opposite, and this is where the 'hate' stems from, after the player from Argentina managed to win over the hearts of the English. We all feel like we've been sucked in and spat out by Tevez.

Since the day we saw him arrive at West Ham United, who were struggling with relegation at the time, alongside fellow countryman Javier Mascherano, he became an instant point of attention to the media and the fans. Generally speaking, he wasn't too well known at the time of his arrival. He was a name that perhaps everyone had heard of being linked with Chelsea and Real Madrid and was already an ever present in the Argentina national side, but it's easy to say that most people had never even seen him play. The signing was huge news. Two Argentinian internationals who were both expected to sign for clubs in The Champions League had signed for Premiership strugglers West Ham.

Even the most naive of football fans found this odd, there was clearly something 'fishy' to say the least about the whole saga, but at the time, we all just wanted to see what would unfold.

Tevez started his short career at the Hammers slowly, but everyone who watched him could see the amount of effort the player put in. Obvious ability on the ball, he combined all the skill and touch we associate with South Americans alongside the passion and 'never say die' attitude we associate with, well, the English.

He scored his first goal against Tottenham Hotspur and duly whipped his shirt off, jumped in the crowd and celebrated with the fans. He felt their passion, he fed off the passion and noise of the Upton Park crowd and wanted to share his moment with the fans. After that goal he started scoring more. The more goals he scored and the harder he worked, the more adoration he received not only from his own fans, but from fans around the country.

He eventually scored the goal which kept West Ham up, a single goal away at Old Trafford was enough to win the game, and to write his name into the clubs folklore.

The summer which followed in 2007 showed that Tevez was owned by a third party company and not West Ham. A long running saga ended with Tevez moving to Manchester United where he again showed more of the same endeavour and endless running he had been associated with when first arriving in The Premiership.

After two years it seemed Manchester United were willing to offer Tevez a five year contract, but after a much publicised celebration where Tevez ran over towards the directors of the club and cupped his hands to his ears after saying he wanted to stay, he ended up making the short journey to Manchester City.

Cracks started to appear however in our adoration for Tevez. Reports came out that he wanted to leave United after he felt the club didn't offer him a big enough wage, something that City and their new Sheikh owners wouldn't have a problem with. Once a player has money in his sights, it's more than likely any connection he had with fans will be diminished.

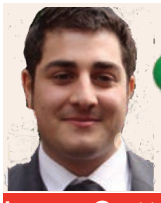
It was Tevez's time at City where he became the money grabbing, public hate figure we all know now. Joorabchian was now appearing more and more on our screens and in our newspapers. Defending his client after revelations he wanted to move for family reasons were overshadowed by turning up late for pre-season and refusing to warm up during matches. City manager Roberto Mancini clearly didn't see eye to eye with Tevez, but his tough approach forced fans to take his side and turn against Tevez.

The Argentine's case isn't helped when his advisor/public speaker was once described as a 'slave driver'. Joorabchian essentially owned Tevez and Mascherano under his company MSI.

In the end, when Tevez eventually leaves The Premiership, he is someone that will certainly be missed. What we saw on the pitch is ultimately what mattered.

Always hard working and a player with an abundance of ability, and overall, someone who you would pay money to watch. Rio Ferdinand said he was the worst trainer he had ever seen and rarely gave his all at the training ground. A statement which Tevez counteracted by declaring the less he ran in training, the more he could run on a Saturday afternoon.

He may have lost his trust off the pitch, but as a player on the pitch, he would improve any team. Isn't that what counts at the end of it all?



SERIE A 2011 - 2012

Luca **Cetta**

Juventus crowned winter champions

Juventus earned the title of winter champions with a 2-0 win at Atalanta, but Milan kept pace with the leaders at Novara. Inter leapfrogged Lazio, while Francesco Totti broke a longstanding goal-scoring record.

Juve travelled to Bergamo knowing a win would ensure the ultimately useless but nonetheless intriguing winter crown. Of the last ten winter champs, eight have gone on to claim Scudetto glory, including Milan last season. Looking to recover from last week's draw, the Bianconeri controlled the match and claimed victory courtesy of Stephan Lichtsteiner and Emanuele Giaccherini.

Injuries to Claudio Marchisio and Simone Pepe soured the win, but Juve remains unbeaten and Coach Antonio Conte was buoyant afterwards: "We have played at a very high level and tonight was the crowning moment. My lads have done remarkable things, but now we must continue giving 120 per cent, as that is the only way to keep hold of the top spot."

Milan went into their match with Juve's result in mind and peppered Novara's goal, only to be frustrated throughout the opening period. The introduction of Stephan El Shaarawy at half-time turned the tide and the Rossoneri finally made their dominance count. Zlatan Ibrahimovic opened the scoring shortly after the break and Robinho doubled the advantage. The Swede then netted his 14th of the campaign towards the end, cheekily back-heeling into an empty net, as Milan made up for their derby disappointment.

Inter moved ahead of Lazio into fourth spot after a 2-1 triumph, but it took a controversial winner to do so. Lazio's Tomasso Rocchi struck the post early but he was not to be denied just after the half-hour, smartly finishing into the far corner. Diego Milito scored his fifth goal in four matches and Giampaolo Pazzini lobbed the winner over Federico Marchetti, but only after appearing to receive the ball in an offside position.

The Ol' Lady has well and truly awoken this season and stands in good stead to be in line for Scudetto honours.

Roma's early blitz against Cesena was the catalyst for a 5-1 win as Francesco Totti celebrated a milestone. The Roma icon netted two of Roma's opening three goals within the first nine minutes to break Gunnar Nordahl's record of 210 goals with a single club, which the Swede attained at Milan in the 1950s. Totti now has 211 Giallorossi goals and told reporters: "It's what I always wanted: to play for one club and break record after record."

Udinese kept pace in third with a 2-1 win at home to Catania. Mariano Izco deflected a Pablo Armero shot into his own net to hand Udinese the lead and the Colombian crossed just after half-time for Antonio Di Natale to smash home a volley. Francesco Lodi scored an injury-time consolation penalty.

Palermo and Genoa played out an entertaining 5-3 encounter. Genoa took the lead, but three first-half goals put the hosts in command. Fabrizio Miccoli got a goal his performance deserved as Genoa threatened a comeback, but Palermo always kept a buffer to ensure Bortolo Mutti's first win as Coach.

Napoli dropped more points, this time at Siena. Former Napoli player Emanuele Calaio put the hosts ahead and the points looked safe when Edinson Cavani's penalty was saved. However, with four minutes left, Goran Pandev rose highest to head home the equaliser. There was another late-show in Lecce. Chievo raced to a two goal lead, only for Lecce to hit back immediately. Davide Di Michele then clinched a point in injury time.

Finally, there were two 0-0 draws on Sunday. Firstly, Bologna and Parma could not be separated in the Emilia-Romagna derby and then Cagliari played out a match of few chances against Fiorentina. The game was initially delayed by 30 minutes as Fiorentina's bus route to the stadium was blocked by protesting workers in the city.

Calcio's Oscar awards were presented on Monday, with Milan dominating. Ibrahimovic won Best Foreign Player and Best Player, while Massimiliano Allegri was Best Coach and Thiago Silva won Best Defender. Milan also had the highest number of players in the Team of the Year but Udinese were not to be outdone. They earned the Best Club award and Samir Handanovic claimed Best Goalkeeper.

The Team of the Year was: Handanovic; Cristian Maggio, Silva, Alessandro Nesta (tied with Andrea Ranocchia), Armero; Marek Hamsik, Kevin-Prince Boateng, Thiago Motta (tied with Claudio Marchisio; Ibrahimovic, Cavani, Di Natale.

The second half of the season commences this weekend. Since the first round was only played in late December, opposing teams will be familiar with one-another. The big match takes place at the Juventus Stadium as Juve hosts Udinese. The league leaders will be without Marchisio (seven days) and Pepe (three weeks), while Eljero Elia and Mirko Vucinic are in doubt. However, they will recover Fabio Quagliarella from a fractured cheekbone. Udinese will be aiming to draw level on points with Juve, but must do so without Mehdi Benatia, Kwadwo Asamoah and Emmanuel Badu, all of whom are at the African Nations Cup.

Both Milan clubs will be aiming for maximum points as the Rossoneri entertain Cagliari and Inter travels to Lecce, still winless at home. Milan have a big injury list which contains Christian Abbiati, Alexandre Pato, Boateng, Alberto Aquilani and more, as Cagliari looks to keep their unbeaten start to 2012 going. Diego Forlan has re-injured his thigh and will be missing from Inter's trip, but Wesley Sneijder is slowly returning to full fitness and could be in contention for a start.

Roma will be favourites to continue their four-match winning run at home to Bologna, while Lazio goes to Chievo looking to bounce back from their San Siro defeat and Napoli faces the inconsistent Genoa having themselves only won three of their past seven matches.

Atalanta will be hoping to kick-start 2012 away at Cesena after three straight losses, while Fiorentina aims to do the same when they face regional rival Siena. Catania are at home against Parma and finally, Palermo hosts bottom club Novara, seeking back-to-back wins for the first time in 2011/12.

Mourinho in the spotlight ahead of trip to Nou Camp

Pepe **Lopez**

Despite appearing to be travelling in cruise control, 5 points clear at the top La Liga, Real Madrid are on the verge of self destruction.

Real defender Sergio Ramos is at the centre of the drama, that is now circling coach Mourinho. The two had a disagreement during training which got personal.

It was reported that Mourinho hit out at the players in regards to comments made to the press, to which Sergio Ramos and Iker Casillas responded. "No, boss, you only read what was published in the press, not everything we said." Ramos was quoted in retort.

Mourinho allegedly then drew Iker Casillas into the dispute; "Of course, as you Spanish are world champions, your friends in the press protect you... like the goalkeeper."

Iker was reported to have responded with; "Boss, here we say things to our faces."

Mourinho was reported to have then taken Ramos to task, and accused him for being at fault for Barcelona's first goal in the Copa Del Rey loss at home to Barcelona.

Upon hearing further response from Ramos, Mourinho allegedly cried out; "What's this then. Now you're trying your hand as coach are you?"

Ramos was then reported to have thrown Mourinho's leadership into disrepute with the following comments; "No, but depending on the match situation, sometimes it's necessary to change the marking. And as you have never been a player, you wouldn't know that this is sometimes necessary."

To bring the club further into disarray, Ramos then accused other players of leaking information to the press, whilst ironically continuing to make public comments; "I think that's enough now and the mole or moles should make sure they inform properly."

Real Madrid trail Barcelona 2-1 after the first leg in Madrid, and will need to win by 2 clear goals or score 2 or more goals at the Nou Camp to progress to the semi-finals of the Spanish King's Cup, a competition which they are the current holders. It's a definite mission impossible for Mourinho, who looks to be running out of ideas on how he can lead Real Madrid to surpass Barcelona as Spain's, Europe's and the World's number one team. Real Madrid is a club with a history of dismissing coaches, despite success, and Mourinho is fast running out of excuses with every repeated loss to Barca.

In a pre-match press conference, Jose gave every impression that he has just about run out of ideas; "I will not answer. I'm the coach and I do not have to explain what approach I choose publicly."

The demands of the Real Madrid job are proving to be a test for The Special One.

Granero staying put in Madrid

Esteban Granero's management say the midfielder will not be leaving Real Madrid for Liverpool during the January transfer window.

The former Getafe star has been struggling to secure regular first team action this term, and has attracted the interest of both Malaga and Liverpool.

Nevertheless, the 24-year-old is committed to Real Madrid and is determined to fight for his chance at the Bernabeu.

"Granero is going to continue with Real Madrid, 100 percent," his management stated to The IBTimes UK Sport.

"He played 65 minutes in the last match in the Bernabeu against Athletic Bilbao and maybe the coach is going to consider him more for the future."

The versatile midfielder has a contract with Real Madrid until June, 2013.

Magath open to Diego reconciliation

Wolfsburg coach Felix Magath has offered Diego the chance to make amends after their fall-out.

The Brazilian joined Atletico Madrid on loan after the duo fell out, with Magath threatening to drop Diego to the reserve team.

However, the former Schalke boss has offered to put the rift to one side should the 26-year-old apologise for his past actions.

"I would not consider myself resentful. I am of the opinion that every man must make some mistakes, but he then must take responsibility for it," Magath told Sports-Bild.

"Clearly Diego has developed in Madrid. I think that it is fair for him to get another chance."

For his part, the former Werder Bremen man stated that he is more than amenable to the prospect of making up with Magath.

"Anything is possible. I have no problem with Felix Magath, or an issue with the past," Diego said.

"Mr. Magath's the boss, he decides. Wolfsburg are a good and professionally managed club."

Diego has made 17 league appearances during his stint in the Spanish capital.

Lazio boss Edy Reja plans to select his strongest line-up for their quarter-final Coppa Italia clash with AC Milan on Thursday.

Lazio at strength for Milan

The Rome club have a strong history in the competition having won the cup five times and also have a strong record against Juventus in the Coppa Italia, the side they will meet in the semis should they overcome Milan.

But Reja knows the key will be for his players to remain composed and is well aware of Milan's breadth of attacking options all over the pitch.

"I don't know whom (AC Milan manager Massimiliano) Allegri will choose, he has quite a wide choice, players with great experience and excellent ability. We all know Milan very well, we all know what great champions they have, but we will go there and give all that we have," Reja said.

"I think Milan will put onto the pitch the best line-up too, I think Allegri will do as I do. I'll try to choose a line-up that will be fit enough to create some difficulties."

Lazio have fallen out of the top four in the Serie A at the expense of Inter Milan, placing more importance on their cup run.

"Any competition we take part is important. Lazio should always give their best and put onto the pitch the best possible line-up. We have to play each game with the aim to win it," Reja said.

"That's our aim, also in the Coppa Italia, and if I'm not wrong, we also have a good tradition in this competition. We'll have a training session today, we have some players with some minor knocks, but nothing serious I think, and tomorrow we'll see the best Lazio possible."

"I'll put onto the pitch those who will be at their 100 percent, but I don't think I'll change much, I'll have to see how fit everyone is this afternoon make a decision after that."

FA chief defends Webb

Football Association chairman David Bernstein has supported Howard Webb after Mario Balotelli's agent criticised the referee.

Mino Raiola, who represents the unpredictable Manchester City forward, accused Webb of acting like a 'coward' for his decision to recommend retrospective action against Balotelli.

The Italian striker was charged with violent conduct in the aftermath of City's 3-2 win over Tottenham on Sunday, in which he was alleged to have stamped on Spurs midfielder Scott Parker.

No action was taken at the time and Balotelli went on to score a dramatic winner in injury time from the penalty spot.

Raiola appeared to suggest the decision by the FA and Webb to charge Balotelli was influenced by public criticism of the player from Spurs manager Harry Redknapp.

But Bernstein has strongly refuted any such insinuation.

"His (Webb's) ability and integrity are beyond question," Bernstein said.

"Howard Webb is a fantastic referee and a great ambassador for the sport. He has the utmost respect from within football in England and around the world."

"Referees make these decisions with honesty and integrity. They do not have the benefit of numerous camera angles and replays. We all have a duty to respect our referees. To question their integrity or imply anything other than total impartiality is reckless and unfounded."

The FA also released a statement which said Webb, upon reviewing video evidence, decided if he had seen Balotelli's challenge during the match, he would have issued a red card.

"The FA is only able to take retrospective action where a match official has indicated that they have not seen an incident," the statement said.

"Specifically relating to the incident involving Mario Balotelli, Howard Webb did not see the incident but, on review, confirmed that he would have sent the player off if he had seen it at the time."

"The parameters and laws of the game are set by FIFA and not the FA."

Balotelli has until late on Wednesday to respond to the charge.

AEK release Burns

Promising Australia international Nathan Burns has had his contract with Greek giants AEK Athens terminated.

The 23-year-old attacker, who joined AEK from Adelaide United in 2008, still had six months remaining on his contract but was granted an early release due to the Athens club's financial woes.

Burns, who has seven caps for the Socceroos, took to Twitter to reveal he was unsure where his next move would be, although there have been rumours of an A-League return or a move to Korea.

"As you may know I have terminated my contract today from AEK Athens," he tweeted.

"I thank AEK for the past three years and many great memories."

"Not sure what team I'm heading to yet. Maybe next week I'll have more news."

Burns only managed seven appearances in all competitions for AEK this term and is now looking to revive his international career with a club where he will see regular action.

A-League pair Newcastle Jets and Sydney FC are understood to both be interested in his services.

ENGLAND EPL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts	Last5games Most recent first
1 Manchester City	22	17	3	2	60	18	+42	54	W W W L D
2 Manchester United	22	16	3	3	54	21	+33	51	W W L L W
3 Tottenham Hotspur	22	14	4	4	41	24	+17	46	L D W W D
4 Chelsea	22	12	5	5	40	25	+15	41	D W W L D
5 Arsenal	22	11	3	8	39	33	+6	36	L L L W D
6 Newcastle United	22	10	6	6	32	30	+2	36	L W W L W
7 Liverpool	22	9	8	5	25	21	+4	35	L D L W D
8 Stoke City	22	8	6	8	23	33	-10	30	L D W D D
9 Norwich City	22	7	8	7	32	36	-4	29	D W W D L
10 Sunderland	22	7	6	9	29	24	+5	27	W L W W D
11 Aston Villa	22	6	9	7	26	29	-3	27	W D L W D
12 Fulham	22	6	8	8	28	31	-3	26	W L W D D
13 Swansea City	22	6	8	8	23	27	-4	26	L W W D D
14 Everton	22	7	5	10	22	26	-4	26	D D L L W
15 West Bromwich …	22	7	4	11	22	31	-9	25	W L L L D
16 Queens Park Ra…	22	5	5	12	22	37	-15	20	W L L L D
17 Bolton Wanderers	22	6	1	15	28	47	-19	19	W L W D L
18 Blackburn Rovers	22	4	6	12	33	45	-12	18	D W L W D
19 Wolverhampton …	22	4	6	12	25	40	-15	18	L D L D D
20 Wigan Athletic	22	3	6	13	19	45	-26	15	L L L D L

SPAIN La Liga

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts	Last5games Most recent first
1 Real Madrid	19	16	1	2	67	18	+49	49	W W W W L
2 Barcelona	19	13	5	1	59	12	+47	44	W W D W W
3 Valencia	19	10	5	4	29	20	+9	35	D L D W L
4 Levante	19	9	4	6	25	22	+3	31	D L D L W
5 Espanyol	19	8	4	7	21	21	+0	28	W D D W W
6 Osasuna	19	6	9	4	22	31	-9	27	D L D W D
7 Athletic Club	19	6	8	5	27	23	+4	26	L W D W D
8 Atlético Madrid	19	7	5	7	30	27	+3	26	W W D L L
9 Sevilla	19	6	8	5	20	20	+0	26	D D L L L
10 Málaga	19	7	4	8	22	28	-6	25	L L D L D
11 Getafe	19	6	6	7	20	25	-5	24	W D D W W
12 Real Betis	19	7	2	10	22	27	-5	23	D L W W W
13 Rayo Vallecano	19	6	4	9	21	28	-7	22	L W W L L
14 Mallorca	19	5	7	7	17	24	-7	22	W L D L W
15 Real Sociedad	19	5	6	8	17	27	-10	21	L W D D D
16 Racing Santander	19	4	8	7	15	23	-8	20	L W W D D
17 Villarreal	19	4	7	8	18	28	-10	19	W L D L D
18 Granada	19	5	4	10	12	26	-14	19	L L L W L
19 Sporting Gijón	19	5	3	11	18	33	-15	18	L W L L W
20 Real Zaragoza	19	2	6	11	14	33	-19	12	D D L L L

ITALY Serie A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts	Last5games Most recent first
1 Juventus	19	11	8	0	31	12	+19	41	W D W D W
2 Milan	19	12	4	3	40	17	+23	40	W L W W W
3 Udinese	19	11	5	3	28	14	+14	38	W L W D D
4 Internazionale	19	11	2	6	30	20	+10	35	W W W W W
5 Lazio	19	9	6	4	27	19	+8	33	L W L D D
6 Roma	18	9	3	6	28	20	+8	30	W W W W D
7 Napoli	19	7	8	4	34	21	+13	29	D D W W L
8 Palermo	19	7	3	9	24	27	-3	24	W L L D L
9 Chievo	19	6	6	7	16	22	-6	24	D W L D W
10 Genoa	19	7	3	9	25	34	-9	24	L W L L W
11 Cagliari	19	5	8	6	16	18	-2	23	D D W L L
12 Parma	19	6	5	8	24	32	-8	23	D W L D D
13 Catania	18	5	7	6	21	27	-6	22	L L D W D
14 Fiorentina	19	5	7	7	18	16	+2	22	D L W D D
15 Atalanta	19	6	8	5	23	25	-2	20	L L L W D
16 Bologna	19	5	5	9	17	25	-8	20	D D W L L
17 Siena	19	4	7	8	20	20	+0	19	D L W D L
18 Cesena	19	4	3	12	13	30	-17	15	L W L L L
19 Lecce	19	3	4	12	20	36	-16	13	D W L L D
20 Novara	19	2	6	11	18	38	-20	12	L L L D L

GERMANY Bundesliga

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts	Last5games Most recent first
1 Bayern München	18	12	1	5	44	13	+31	37	L W W W L
2 Borussia Dortmund	18	11	4	3	40	13	+27	37	W W D D W
3 Schalke 04	18	12	1	5	41	23	+18	37	W W W W L
4 Borussia M'gla…	18	11	3	4	28	12	+16	36	W W L D W
5 Werder Bremen	18	9	3	6	30	31	-1	30	D L W L W
6 Bayer Leverkusen	18	8	5	5	25	24	+1	29	W L D W D
7 Hannover 96	18	5	9	4	20	24	-4	24	D D D D D
8 Hoffenheim	18	6	5	7	19	19	+0	23	D D W L D
9 Wolfsburg	18	7	2	9	24	34	-10	23	W W L D L
10 Stuttgart	18	6	4	8	24	23	+1	22	L L L D L
11 Köln	18	6	3	9	27	36	-9	21	L L D W D
12 Nürnberg	18	6	3	9	19	28	-9	21	W W L L W
13 Hertha BSC	18	4	8	6	24	28	-4	20	L D L D D
14 Hamburger SV	18	4	7	7	22	32	-10	19	L D D W D
15 Mainz 05	18	4	6	8	24	32	-8	18	L L D D D
16 Kaiserslautern	18	3	8	7	13	21	-8	17	D D D D L
17 Freiburg	18	4	4	10	22	39	-17	16	W L L D D
18 Augsburg	18	3	6	9	15	29	-14	15	L D W L W

HOLLAND Eredivisie

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts	Last5games Most recent first
1 AZ	18	12	3	3	37	16	+21	39	D L W D L
2 PSV	18	11	5	2	49	20	+29	38	D W W L W
3 Twente	18	10	6	2	48	18	+30	36	W L W W D
4 Ajax	18	9	7	2	47	24	+23	34	D W W W W
5 Heerenveen	18	8	7	3	41	28	+13	31	W L W W D
6 Feyenoord	18	9	4	5	35	24	+11	31	L W D W W
7 Vitesse	18	8	5	5	23	17	+6	29	L W D W D
8 Groningen	18	8	5	5	31	29	+2	29	W W D D L
9 Roda JC	18	8	1	9	32	41	-9	25	D W L W W
10 ADO Den Haag	18	6	4	8	25	34	-9	22	D L W W D
11 NAC Breda	18	6	3	9	24	31	-7	21	L W L L D
12 Heracles	18	5	5	8	28	27	+1	20	L L L W L
13 NEC	18	6	2	10	18	27	-9	20	W W L D L
14 Utrecht	18	4	6	8	29	36	-7	18	D L D L L
15 RKC Waalwijk	18	5	3	10	17	33	-16	18	L W L L L
16 VVV	18	3	4	11	18	43	-25	13	W L W L L
17 De Graafschap	18	3	3	12	16	41	-25	12	L L L L W
18 Excelsior	18	2	5	11	12	41	-29	11	W L L D L

SCOTLAND SPL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts	Last5games Most recent first
1 Celtic	24	19	2	3	48	16	+32	59	W W W W W
2 Rangers	24	17	4	3	43	14	+29	55	D W W L L
3 Heart of Midlo…	24	10	5	9	30	18	+12	35	L W W D W
4 St. Johnstone	23	10	5	8	30	24	+6	35	W L W W L
5 Motherwell	22	10	5	7	25	26	-1	35	D L L L D
6 Dundee United	24	6	9	9	33	38	-5	27	D L L D W
7 Kilmarnock	23	6	9	8	27	34	-7	27	L D W L L
8 Aberdeen	24	6	8	10	26	30	-4	26	D D W D L
9 St. Mirren	24	6	8	10	25	36	-11	26	L L L D W
10 Inverness CT	23	7	4	12	30	40	-10	25	W W D W L
11 Hibernian	23	4	6	13	24	41	-17	18	L W L D L
12 Dunfermline At…	22	4	5	13	25	49	-24	17	W L L L L

THE CHAMPIONSHIP

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts	Last5games Most recent first
1 West Ham United	27	16	5	6	43	24	+19	53	W W W L D
2 Southampton	27	15	5	7	50	30	+20	50	L W L L W
3 Cardiff City	27	13	10	4	44	29	+15	49	W D W W D
4 Middlesbrough	27	12	9	6	31	28	+3	45	L L L D W
5 Hull City	27	14	3	10	28	25	+3	45	W W L L L
6 Birmingham City	26	12	7	7	42	26	+16	43	W W W D W
7 Blackpool	27	11	9	7	43	34	+9	42	W D W L W
8 Reading	27	12	6	9	34	27	+7	42	L W L W W
9 Leeds United	27	12	6	9	43	38	+5	42	W D W L L
10 Brighton & Hov…	27	12	5	10	30	29	+1	41	W W W L L
11 Derby County	27	12	5	10	31	33	-2	41	D W W W W
12 Burnley	27	12	4	11	39	33	+6	40	D W L W W
13 Leicester City	27	10	8	9	36	30	+6	38	W L W D D
14 Crystal Palace	27	10	7	10	26	27	-1	37	L D L W L
15 Barnsley	27	10	6	11	38	42	-4	36	L W L W L
16 Peterborough U…	27	9	6	12	45	44	+1	33	L L D D W
17 Portsmouth	26	8	7	11	29	29	+0	31	L L W D L
18 Watford	27	7	9	11	28	39	-11	30	L L L W D
19 Bristol City	27	8	6	13	25	37	-12	30	W L W W L
20 Millwall	27	7	8	12	27	35	-8	29	W L L L W
21 Ipswich Town	27	8	4	15	38	54	-16	28	L D L L L
22 Nottingham Forest	27	7	3	17	22	44	-22	24	L L W L L
23 Doncaster Rovers	27	6	5	16	23	45	-22	23	L D W L L
24 Coventry City	27	5	7	15	23	36	-13	22	W L L W W

LEAGUE ONE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts	Last5games Most recent first
1 Charlton Athletic	26	18	6	2	51	19	+32	60	W W W L W
2 Huddersfield Town	27	14	11	2	55	27	+28	53	W W W D D
3 Sheffield United	27	16	5	6	52	28	+24	53	L W W L W
4 Sheffield Wedn…	27	16	5	6	50	35	+15	53	W D L W W
5 Milton Keynes Dons	26	13	8	5	51	30	+21	47	L D W D W
6 Stevenage	27	12	9	6	43	25	+18	45	W D W L W
7 Carlisle United	26	11	9	6	41	39	+2	42	D W W D D
8 AFC Bournemouth	27	11	7	9	35	34	+1	40	W W D W W
9 Brentford	27	9	10	8	33	33	+0	37	L D D L D
10 Bury	26	11	4	11	35	41	-6	37	W L W L W
11 Preston North End	27	10	6	11	40	46	-6	36	D L W D L
12 Leyton Orient	27	9	8	10	30	38	-8	35	W D L W W
13 Notts County	27	9	7	11	42	40	+2	34	D D L D L
14 Hartlepool United	27	9	7	11	32	36	-4	34	D D W L L
15 Colchester United	26	8	9	9	36	41	-5	33	L D L W L
16 Oldham Athletic	26	8	8	10	32	37	-5	32	D L D W L
17 Tranmere Rovers	27	8	7	12	28	33	-5	31	L D L D L
18 Exeter City	27	6	9	12	24	39	-15	27	D D W D L
19 Walsall	27	4	13	10	26	33	-7	25	D D D L D
20 Scunthorpe United	27	4	13	10	34	43	-9	25	L D D W D
21 Yeovil Town	27	5	9	13	30	45	-15	24	L W L D L
22 Wycombe Wanderers	27	6	5	16	33	49	-16	23	W L L L L
23 Rochdale	27	4	9	14	24	49	-25	21	L D L L D
24 Chesterfield	27	4	8	15	32	49	-17	20	W D L D D

LEAGUE TWO

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts	Last5games Most recent first
1 Southend United	26	16	4	6	51	28	+23	52	L W W D W
2 Crawley Town	26	15	7	4	48	30	+18	52	D D D W L
3 Cheltenham Town	26	16	4	6	39	23	+16	52	L W W W D
4 Swindon Town	26	15	4	7	41	20	+21	49	W W W W L
5 Shrewsbury Town	26	14	6	6	39	25	+14	48	W W D L D
6 Torquay United	27	13	8	6	41	32	+9	47	W W W W D
7 Oxford United	27	11	9	7	38	27	+11	42	D L W D D
8 Gillingham	26	12	5	9	44	35	+9	41	L L W L W
9 Burton Albion	27	11	8	8	40	41	-1	41	D L L L D
10 Accrington Stanley	27	10	10	7	34	29	+5	40	D L W W D
11 Crewe Alexandra	27	12	3	12	37	38	-1	39	W W W L W
12 Port Vale	27	11	5	11	44	39	+5	38	W L L L L
13 Rotherham United	26	10	7	9	42	39	+3	37	L L W L D
14 Morecambe	27	9	9	9	43	34	+9	36	L D L W D
15 AFC Wimbledon	27	10	5	12	38	51	-13	35	W W W L L
16 Macclesfield Town	27	8	6	13	25	31	-6	30	L L L L W
17 Bristol Rovers	27	8	6	13	34	48	-14	30	W D W L L
18 Barnet	26	8	5	13	33	46	-13	29	W W W L L
19 Aldershot Town	26	8	4	14	24	34	-10	28	D L L L D
20 Bradford City	26	6	9	11	31	36	-5	27	D D L W W
21 Hereford United	27	6	8	13	27	43	-16	26	D W L W D
22 Plymouth Argyle	27	5	7	15	29	49	-20	22	D W L L D
23 Dagenham & Red…	27	6	3	18	26	47	-21	21	L L L D W
24 Northampton Town	27	5	6	16	33	56	-23	21	L L W D L

Greece Super League

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts	Last5games Most recent first
1 Panathinaikos	18	14	3	1	37	15	+22	45	W W W W W
2 Olympiakos Piraeus	18	12	4	2	39	14	+25	40	L W D W W
3 AEK Athens	18	10	4	4	26	18	+8	34	D D W D L
4 PAOK	18	9	5	4	26	15	+11	32	W W D W W
5 Xanthi	18	8	5	5	24	17	+7	29	W D D W W
6 Atromitos	17	7	6	4	16	15	+1	27	L D W L W
7 OFI	18	7	5	6	20	16	+4	26	W W L D L
8 Aris	18	5	7	6	16	16	+0	22	W D D W L
9 Ergotelis	18	6	4	8	19	23	-4	22	D L W L W
10 Panionios	18	5	4	9	15	19	-4	19	L W L W L
11 Asteras Tripolis	17	5	4	8	10	19	-9	19	L W D W L
12 Panaitolikos	16	4	5	7	12	18	-6	17	D L L D D
13 Kerkyra	16	2	6	8	9	21	-12	12	D D L W D
14 PAS Giannina	16	2	5	9	13	22	-9	11	L L L D L
15 Levadiakos	14	2	4	8	8	23	-15	10	L L D L L
16 Doxa Dramas	14	1	3	10	3	22	-19	6	W L L L D

France Ligue 1

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts	Last5games Most recent first
1 PSG	20	13	4	3	34	18	+16	43	W W D W W
2 Montpellier	20	12	4	4	40	23	+17	40	W L D L W
3 Lille	20	9	9	2	33	21	+12	36	L D D W W
4 Olympique Lyon	20	11	2	7	31	22	+9	35	L L W W W
5 Stade Rennes	20	10	5	5	31	23	+8	35	W W L D L
6 Olympique Mars…	20	9	7	4	29	18	+11	34	W W W D W
7 Saint-Étienne	20	9	6	5	24	21	+3	33	W L W W D
8 Toulouse	20	8	7	5	21	20	+1	31	L D D W L
9 Bordeaux	20	6	8	6	22	23	-1	26	W L W D W
10 Lorient	20	6	7	7	20	23	-3	25	D D L L L
11 Brest	20	4	12	4	20	19	+1	24	W D W D D
12 Evian TG	20	5	7	8	28	32	-4	22	L W L L W
13 Dijon	20	6	4	10	23	36	-13	22	W D L L D
14 Valenciennes	20	5	5	10	19	23	-4	20	L W L W L
15 Caen	20	5	5	10	24	31	-7	20	L D L L L
16 Auxerre	20	4	7	9	27	32	-5	19	L D L W L
17 Nancy	20	4	7	9	19	28	-9	19	D L W D L
18 Nice	20	4	6	10	21	24	-3	18	L D W L W
19 Sochaux	20	4	6	10	21	35	-14	18	L L L L D
20 Ajaccio	20	4	6	10	22	37	-15	18	W W W D L

Portugal Premeira Liga

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts	Last5games Most recent first
1 Benfica	15	12	3	0	38	12	+26	39	W W W W W
2 Porto	15	11	4	0	34	8	+26	37	W D W W W
3 Sporting Braga	15	9	4	2	28	14	+14	31	W W W W L
4 Sporting CP	15	8	4	3	27	14	+13	28	L D D W L
5 Marítimo	15	7	5	3	21	18	+3	26	D W L L D
6 Vitória Guimarães	15	6	2	7	21	16	+5	20	W W D L W
7 Académica	15	5	3	7	18	20	-2	18	L D D W L
8 Olhanense	15	4	5	6	17	20	-3	17	W L L L D
9 Beira-Mar	15	4	4	7	13	12	+1	16	L L W L W
10 Gil Vicente	15	3	7	5	13	23	-10	16	D L D L W
11 Nacional	15	4	4	7	14	26	-12	16	D W D L D
12 Feirense	15	3	6	6	11	20	-9	15	D L W D W
13 Rio Ave	15	4	2	9	13	21	-8	14	L W L W L
14 Vitória Setúbal	15	3	5	7	11	24	-13	14	L D D D L
15 União de Leiria	15	4	1	10	16	29	-13	13	D L L W L
16 Paços de Ferreira	15	2	3	10	14	32	-18	9	D L L L D

One Game At A Time

France
Saturday, 28 January 2012
Auxerre v Nancy
Brest v Paris SG
Lorient v Sochaux
Lyon v Dijon
Nice v Montpellier
Toulouse v Caen
Lille v St Etienne
Sunday, 29 January 2012
Evian Thonon Gaillar v Bordeaux
Valenciennes v AC Ajaccio
Rennes v Marseille

Germany
Friday, 27 January 2012
Hannover 96 v Nuremberg
Saturday, 28 January 2012
Augsburg v FC Kaiserslautern
Bayern Munich v Wolfsburg
Borussia Dortmund v TSG Hoffenheim
Hertha Berlin v Hamburg
Werder Bremen v Bayer Leverkusen
Cologne v Schalke 04
Sunday, 29 January 2012
Mainz v SC Freiburg
VfB Stuttgart v Borussia M'gladbach

Italy
Saturday, 28 January 2012
Catania v Parma
Juventus v Udinese
Sunday, 29 January 2012
Fiorentina v Siena
Cesena v Atalanta
Genoa v Napoli
Lecce v Inter Milan
Palermo v Novara
Roma v Bologna
AC Milan v Cagliari
Chievo v Lazio
Tuesday, 31 January 2012
Parma v Juventus

England EPL
Tuesday, 31 January 2012
Swansea v Chelsea5
Tottenham v Wigan
Wolverhampton v Liverpool
Everton v Man City
Man Utd v Stoke
Wednesday, 1 February 2012
Aston Villa v QPR
Blackburn v Newcastle
Bolton v Arsenal
Fulham v West Brom
Sunderland v Norwich

The Championship
Saturday, 28 January 2012
Peterborough v Portsmouth
Reading v Bristol City
Tuesday, 31 January 2012
Barnsley v Derby
Hull v Doncaster
Ipswich v West Ham
Leeds v Birmingham
Millwall v Watford
Nott'm Forest v Burnley
Southampton v Cardiff
Blackpool v Coventry
Crystal Palace v Brighton
Wednesday, 1 February 2012
Leicester v Middlesbrough

Scotland
Saturday, 28 January 2012
Aberdeen v Dunfermline
Inverness CT v St Mirren
Motherwell v St Johnstone
Rangers v Hibernian
Wednesday, 8 February 2012
Hearts v Celtic

Greece
Saturday, 28 January 2012
OFI Crete v FC Xanthi
Panionios v Kerkyra
Olympiakos v Ergotelis
Sunday, 29 January 2012
Atromitos v Asteras Tripoli
Giannina v Panetolikos
Aris Salonika v Levadiakos
Doxa Dramas v Panathinaikos
AEK Athens v PAOK Salonika

Spain
Saturday, 28 January 2012
Espanyol v Mallorca
Rayo Vallecano v Athletic Bilbao
Real Madrid v Real Zaragoza
Villarreal v Barcelona
Sunday, 29 January 2012
Real Betis v Granada
Levante v Getafe
Real Sociedad v Sporting Gijon
Racing Santander v Valencia
Malaga v Sevilla
Monday, 30 January 2012
Osasuna v Atletico Madrid

Holland
Friday, 27 January 2012
PSV Eindhoven v Vitesse
Saturday, 28 January 2012
Heerenveen v FC Utrecht
Heracles v SC Excelsior Rotterdam
NAC v De Graafschap
Roda JC v AZ Alkmaar
Sunday, 29 January 2012
Feyenoord v Ajax
FC Twente v FC Groningen
RKC Waalwijk v VVV Venlo
NEC v ADO Den Haag

Portugal
Friday, 27 January
Guimaraes v Nacional
Saturday, 28 January
Rio Ave v Academica
Feirense v Benfica
Sunday, 29 January
Uniao Leiria v Pacos Ferreira
Vitoria Setubal v Olhanense
Sporting v Beira Mar
Gil Vicente v FC Porto
Monday, 30 January
Maritimo v Braga

...Results...Results....Results.....Results....Results....Results...Results...Results...Results...Results...Results...

Wednesday, 25 January 2012
Carling League Cup
Liverpool 2-2 Man City (agg 3-2)

Orange Africa Cup of Nations
Libya 2-2 Zambia

Tuesday, 24 January 2012
Carling League Cup
Cardiff 1-0 Crystal Palace (agg 1-1)
(Cardiff win 3-1 on penalties)

Npower League One
Notts County 0-0 Preston
Scunthorpe 1-3 Sheffield Wed
Stevenage 4-2 MK Dons

Npower League Two
AFC Wimbledon 2-1 Macclesfield
Torquay 1-0 Dag & Red

Clydesdale Bank Scottish Premier League
Motherwell 3-1 Dunfermline

Scottish Second Division
East Fife 2-0 Albion
Forfar 2-2 Stirling

Orange Africa Cup of Nations
Ghana 1-0 Botswana
Mali 1-0 Guinea

Monday, 23 January 2012
Npower Championship
Southampton 0-2 Leicester

Orange Africa Cup of Nations
Gabon 2-0 Niger
Morocco 1-2 Tunisia

Sunday, 22 January 2012
Barclays Premier League
Arsenal 1-2 Man Utd
Man City 3-2 Tottenham

Orange Africa Cup of Nations
Burkina Faso 1-2 Angola
Ivory Coast 1-0 Sudan

Saturday, 21 January 2012
Barclays Premier League
Bolton 3-1 Liverpool
Everton 1-1 Blackburn
Fulham 5-2 Newcastle
Norwich 0-0 Chelsea
QPR 3-1 Wigan
Stoke 1-2 West Brom
Sunderland 2-0 Swansea
Wolverhampton 2-3 Aston Villa

Npower Championship
Barnsley 1-3 Millwall
Birmingham 3-0 Watford
Blackpool 2-1 Crystal Palace
Bristol City 2-1 Doncaster
Burnley 0-0 Derby
Cardiff 3-2 Portsmouth
Coventry 3-1 Middlesbrough
Leeds 3-1 Ipswich
Peterborough 1-2 Brighton
Reading 0-1 Hull
West Ham 2-1 Nott'm Forest

Npower League One
Bournemouth 2-1 Tranmere
Bury 3-2 Yeovil
Carlisle 1-1 Walsall
Charlton 1-0 Sheffield Utd
Colchester 1-2 Chesterfield
Huddersfield 3-2 Brentford
Notts County 1-1 MK Dons
Oldham 0-0 Exeter
Preston 0-2 Leyton Orient
Scunthorpe 1-1 Stevenage
Sheffield Wed 2-2 Hartlepool
Wycombe 3-0 Rochdale

Npower League Two
Aldershot 0-0 Accrington Stanley
Bradford 1-1 Burton Albion
Cheltenham 0-2 Bristol Rovers
Crewe 4-1 Dag & Red
Gillingham 3-4 AFC Wimbledon
Morecambe 1-2 Torquay
Northampton 1-2 Barnet
Oxford Utd 2-2 Hereford
Plymouth 1-1 Crawley Town
Rotherham 0-1 Port Vale
Shrewsbury 2-1 Southend
Swindon 1-0 Macclesfield

Clydesdale Bank Scottish Premier League
Dundee Utd 1-1 Motherwell
Hibernian 2-3 St Johnstone
Inverness CT 1-0 Hearts
Kilmarnock 0-3 Dunfermline
Rangers 1-1 Aberdeen
St Mirren 0-2 Celtic

Scottish First Division
Ayr 2-2 Hamilton
Livingston 2-2 Queen of South
Partick Thistle 0-0 Dundee
Raith Rovers 2-2 Falkirk

Scottish Second Division
Airdrie Utd 2-3 Dumbarton
Arbroath 6-1 Albion
Forfar 1-0 Cowdenbeath
Stirling 0-1 East Fife

Scottish Third Division
Annan Athletic 2-3 Queen's Park
Clyde 0-1 Peterhead
East Stirling 3-1 Montrose
Elgin 4-0 Berwick
Stranraer 0-4 Alloa

Orange Africa Cup of Nations
Equatorial Guinea 1-0 Libya
Senegal 1-2 Zambia

Euro Results

ITALY
Roma 5 - 1 Cesena
Atalanta 0 - 2 Juventus
Bologna 0 - 0 Parma
Lecce 2 - 2 Chievo
Novara 0 - 3 Milan
Palermo 5 - 3 Genoa
Siena 1 - 1 Napoli
Udinese 2 - 1 Catania
Cagliari 0 - 0 Fiorentina
Internazionale 2 - 1 Lazio

SPAIN
Racing Santander 1 - 2 Getafe
Espanyol 3 - 0 Granada
Real Sociedad 0 - 4 Atlético Madrid
Real Betis 1 - 1 Sevilla
Osasuna 1 - 1 Valencia
Rayo Vallecano 0 - 1 Mallorca
Málaga 1 - 4 Barcelona
Levante 0 - 0 Real Zaragoza
Real Madrid 4 - 1 Athletic Club
Villarreal 3 - 0 Sporting Gijón

GERMANY
Borussia M'gla… 3 - 1 Bayern München
Hoffenheim 0 - 0 Hannover 96
Schalke 04 3 - 1 Stuttgart
Wolfsburg 1 - 0 Köln
Freiburg 1 - 0 Augsburg
Nürnberg 2 - 0 Hertha BSC
Kaiserslautern 0 - 0 Werder Bremen
Hamburger SV 1 - 5 Borussia Dortmund
Bayer Leverkusen 3 - 2 Mainz 05

FRANCE
Bordeaux 2 - 1 Valenciennes
Caen 0 - 2 Stade Rennes
Montpellier 1 - 0 Olympique Lyon
PSG 3 - 1 Toulouse
Dijon 3 - 1 Evian TG
Ajaccio 2 - 1 Auxerre
Nancy 2 - 2 Lorient
Brest 1 - 0 Nice
Saint-Étienne 1 - 0 Sochaux
Olympique Mars… 2 - 0 Lille

GREECE
Asteras Tripolis 2 - 1 PAS GianninA
Ergotelis 1 - 1 AEK Athens
PAOK 1 - 0 Panionios
Doxa Dramas 1 - 3 Aris
Panaitolikos 1 - 1 Kerkyra
Xanthi 1 - 0 Olympiakos Piraeus
Levadiakos 0 - 2 OFI
Panathinaikos 1 - 0 Atromitos Doxa
Dramas 1 - 0 Asteras Tripolis
Panathinaikos 3 - 0 Levadiakos

HOLLAND
ADO Den Haag 3 - 3 Roda JC
De Graafschap 0 - 2 Heerenveen
Excelsior 3 - 0 NAC Breda
Twente 5 - 0 RKC Waalwijk
Vitesse 0 - 1 NEC
VVV 2 - 1 Feyenoord
AZ 1 - 1 Ajax
Groningen 2 - 1 Heracles
Utrecht 1 - 1 PSV

PORTUGAL
Sporting Braga 2 - 1 Sporting CP
Académica 0 - 0 União de Leiria
Beira-Mar 1 - 2 Marítimo
Nacional 2 - 0 Feirense
Paços de Ferreira 2 - 1 Vitória Setúbal
Sporting Braga 2 - 1 Rio Ave
Porto 3 - 1 Vitória Guimarães
Benfica 3 - 1 Gil Vicente
Olhanense 0 - 0 Sporting CP

ROAR CHOOSE NOT TO APPEAL

Brisbane Roar Football Club has decided not to appeal the ban imposed by Football Federation Australia on striker Besart Berisha.

Berisha was handed a one match ban for an alleged breach of the National Code of Conduct in the aftermath of Brisbane's dramatic 2-1 win over Sydney FC at Suncorp Stadium on January 14.

The FFA also imposed a further one match ban which has been suspended on condition the player does not breach the National Code of Conduct prior to the end of the Hyundai A-League season, including finals.

Brisbane Roar CEO Michael Bowers said the club fully supported Berisha, but believed in this instance accepting the ban was the right decision.

Bowers said discussions over a range of meetings in Melbourne last weekend that included board members, senior club management and the player had lead to the club's final position.

"Besart has been nothing short of outstanding for this club since his arrival, both on and off the field," Bowers said.

"He has impressed everyone who has come in contact with him with his good natured demeanour and positive outlook.

"This past week has undoubtedly been a difficult one for Besart and as a club we have made the decision to accept the ban, put the events behind us and move forward.

"The club must balance the prospects of success of an appeal, the disruption to our normal activities and the distraction from our upcoming game against Newcastle in making this decision.

"So it is with a great deal of reluctance that we believe the best course of action is to accept the FFA decision and concentrate on our preparation for the Newcastle Jets FC game at Suncorp Stadium this Saturday night at this point in time."

The club has now begun an education and counselling process to assist its players in handling on-field issues so they are better prepared to deal with encounters on the field.

Brisbane Roar now considers this matter to be close and will make no further comment.

Qantas Socceroo Mark Milligan signs loan deal with Victory

Melbourne-bound: Mark Milligan arrives from Japan.

Melbourne-bound: Ricardinho

Melbourne Victory announces that Qantas Socceroo defender, Mark Milligan, will join the club on loan until the end of the Hyundai A-League season, subject to an International Transfer Certificate (ITC).

Milligan returns to the Hyundai A-League for a second time after initially representing Sydney FC (2005-08) and Newcastle Jets (2008/09), before the twelve-time Socceroo headed to Chinese club, Shanghai Shenhua, and then moved on to current club, JEF United, in Japan's J-League 2.

The 26 year-old said, "The Japanese season has finished up now, so rather than have an extended break, I was really keen to get back to the A-League and Melbourne Victory was a very attractive option for me."

"Playing overseas really heightens your interest in the domestic game back home, so I've been keeping a close eye on the A-League since I moved away a few years ago, and I'm really excited to be back until the end of the season."

"Hopefully I can help get the club's season back-on-track. The Melbourne Victory fans are the most passionate in the country so it will be great to play in front of them again, only this time as a Victory player," Milligan added.

Melbourne Victory Coach, Jim Magilton, is eager to see the former Olyroos captain in action, "Mark brings a great deal of experience and quality to the squad and we're delighted to have him for the rest of the season."

"He's a versatile player and can do a number of different jobs, so I expect him to be a real asset to the team."

"While we have an array of attacking options, we felt it was imperative to bring in a player like Mark to strengthen our defensive set-up," Magilton added.

In further player movement news, Melbourne Victory can also confirm that it has come to a financial settlement with former marquee-man, Ricardinho, thus freeing up a visa spot on the clubs list.

FOOTBALL BIEFS

Carling Cup: Liverpool 2 (3) Manchester City 2 (2)

Liverpool booked their first Wembley appearance since 1996 as they edged out Manchester City in the Carling Cup semi-final at Anfield.

City - trying to overturn Liverpool's one-goal advantage from the first leg at Etihad Stadium - took the lead twice on the night to revive their hopes of joining Cardiff City in the final.

Liverpool, however, were determined not to let the prize slip from their grasp, responding with spirit to earn the aggregate victory that their performance on the night deserved.

Nigel de Jong's spectacular goal for City - only his second for the club - put them ahead but Liverpool drew level before the interval through Steven Gerrard's hotly-contested penalty, awarded after Micah Richards deflected Daniel Agger's shot onto his own arm.

Edin Dzeko's close-range strike once again sparked anxiety around Anfield, but the outstanding Craig Bellamy had the last word against his former club, sliding home a cleverly crafted strike with 16 minutes left.

Liverpool's late nerves could have been settled earlier but for a superb display from City keeper Joe Hart, who produced a string of top-class saves, particularly from Martin Skrtel and Stewart Downing in the second half.

For delighted Liverpool manager Kenny Dalglish, it marks a return to the stadium that was a familiar scene of triumph during his first spell as player and manager at Anfield and he will now set his sights on Liverpool's first piece of silverware since their FA Cup win against West Ham United in Cardiff in 2006.

City boss Roberto Mancini, who will now turn his attention back to claiming the Premier League title, found a former star returning to haunt him in the shape of Bellamy, who was a constant danger throughout and was deservedly afforded a standing ovation when he was substituted in the dying moments.

African Cup of Nations wrap: Co-hosts shock Senegal

Favourites Senegal crashed out of the Africa Cup of Nations after a 2-1 loss to minnows Equatorial Guinea.

Despite creating plenty of chances throughout the game, Senegal struggled to stamp their authority and were punished by a second-half goal from Iban Iyanga.

Substitute Moussa Sow netted an equaliser just before injury time, but David Alvarez popped up with the winner for Equatorial Guinea, who moved into the quarter-finals.

Senegal went all guns blazing right from the start, with the pace and skill of winger Issiar Dia causing plenty of trouble for Equatorial Guinea.

The home side was rewarded moments later as a cross by David Alvarez was headed home by Iyanga from inside the box to put Senegal on the brink of elimination.

Senegal found the goal they deserved in the 89th minute through substitute Sow, who scored with an acrobatic finish.

Alvarez, however, had the final say scoring with a thunderous long-range strike in injury time.

Laurence Doe was sent off moments later, but it mattered little as Equatorial Guinea progressed.

In the rain-affected earlier game, Libya midfielder Ahmed Saad Osman gave his country the lead twice, but Zambia grabbed a share of the spoils in a 2-2 draw.

Walid Al Khatroushi provided a defence-splitting pass for Osman who slotted past badly-positioned Zambia goalkeeper Kennedy Mweene.

Zambia equalised through an acrobatic Mayuka volley on 28 minutes after Rainford Kalaba had provided an intelligent cross into the penalty box.

Libya surprised their opponents with another Osman goal three minutes into the second half.

Chisamba Lungu's failed clearance allowed the Club Africain player to wriggle his way past a second defender, slicing his shot in off the post.

The north Africans' lead lasted even less than their first one, though, and it only took nine minutes for the Zambians to pull level again, this time through a Katongo header off a spectacular Mayuka scissor-kick cross.

The result leaves the Zambians on four points and severely dents the Libyans' already slim chances of qualifying.

No appeal to Balotelli ban

Manchester City have failed to appeal the four-match ban given to Mario Balotelli after his stamp on Tottenham's Scott Parker.

Although the Italian forward was not reprimanded during the match, he was banned after the FA reviewed video evidence and the club were given until 18.00GMT on Wednesday to appeal the charge.

This deadline was not met and therefore the controversial City striker will begin his ban immediately, ruling him out of Wednesday's Carling Cup semi-final against Liverpool.

If his team-mates are able to overcome their 1-0 deficit from the first leg, Balotelli would be available to manager Roberto Mancini for the final at Wembley on February 26, after he sits out Premier League games against Everton, Fulham and Aston Villa.

Carling Cup: Cardiff 1 (3) Crystal Palace 0 (1)

Cardiff City reached the Carling Cup final at Wembley after holding their nerve in a penalty shootout.

Malkay Mackay's men earned the right to play either Liverpool or Manchester City on February 26 after Craig Conway, Rudy Gestede and Peter Whittingham scored from the spot on Tuesday.

Jonathan Parr was the unlucky man for Crystal Palace as he blazed high and wide to ensure that there will be a Welsh representation at Wembley.

Cardiff, trailing 1-0 from the first leg, were deserved winners on the night as they overcame a stern test from 10-man Palace, but were forced to go the distance after missing a string of chances in normal and extra-time.

They took the lead when Anthony Gardner, Palace's hero from the first leg, was unfortunate to divert Craig Conway's right-wing cross in at his near post via the woodwork after seven minutes.

Palace had Paddy McCarthy sent off for a second bookable offence with 13 minutes to go but the Londoners held on doggedly for around 45 minutes with some desperate defending to ensure that the semi-final would be decided from 12 yards.

Cardiff City reached the Carling Cup final at Wembley after holding their nerve in a penalty shootout.

The game had started at a frenetic pace, and even though Cardiff began to dominate possession, Palace were always a threat on the counter attack, spearheaded by the influential Wilfried Zaha.

Zaha, 19, sent over a teasing cross after turning Darcy Blake again with ease, but with the right-back and goalkeeper Tom Heaton struggling, the ball was cleared off the line.

Cardiff took control and had a number of attempts to double their advantage.

First, Whittingham tested Julian Speroni from range with a stinging drive before Kenny Miller missed a guilt-edged chance when Aron Gunnarsson slipped in the Scotland striker who sent his effort just inches past Speroni's far post.

Miller then went one step closer to doubling Cardiff's advantage just before the break when he capitalised on slack defending from Conway's deep centre, before swivelling and firing a shot against the post.

Cardiff continued their dominance in the second half.

Former Aston Villa midfielder Whittingham was at the centre of everything good about the home side's play teeing up Anthony Gerrard with a sumptuous chip, but the defender's effort was hacked clear by Patrick McCarthy.

The game changed with 13 minutes left, when McCarthy was dismissed for tackling Miller from behind.

Cardiff came close in the final stages as Zaha's block denied Don Cowie a clear sight at goal and Conway struck just inches wide.

Palace defended manfully throughout extra-time as Cardiff mustered two clear-cut chances.

Cowie initially sliced over, before substitute Filip Kiss cracked the bar with a rasping drive.

It appeared that Cardiff's profligacy may come back to haunt them in the shootout, but despite Miller's miss, Palace were poor from the spot as Easter and Scannell had their penalties saved comfortably by Heaton.

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